

ASSESSING RESULTS OF YEARS ONE, TWO, AND THREE
IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

by

Elizabeth Conaway

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Summer 2014

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfrAM	African-American
BM	Benchmark
Cauc	Caucasian
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
ELL	English Language Learner
FSF	First Sound Fluency
Hisp	Hispanic
IHDP	Infant Health Development Program
Int	Intensive
ISF	Initial Sound Fluency
LNF	Letter Naming Fluency
MECC	Morris Early Childhood Center
NLSY	National Longitudinal Survey of Youth
NWF	Nonsense Word Fluency
ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
PSF	Phoneme Segmentation Fluency
RtI	Response to Intervention
SES	Socio-Economic Status
STAR	Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading
Strat	Strategic
TAM	Team Approach to Mastery
DOE	Department of Education
LD	Language Developing mother

ABSTRACT

Morris Early Childhood Center's mission is to "Engage all learners in the highest quality education". This mission is challenging because students enter kindergarten at many different instructional levels. Some of these students have no academic readiness skills while others are able to fluently read decodable texts. This means that teachers must be able to differentiate their reading instruction so that all students' needs are met. In addition, reading intervention must occur in each classroom daily.

During the 2009-2010 school year, we began to provide differentiated reading instruction and targeted reading interventions to students who did not attain benchmark status on the beginning of the year Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment. The goal for these interventions was to raise the percentage of kindergarten students who were able to perform at the benchmark level on the end of year DIBELS assessment. However, after reflecting on the end of year 2009-2010 data, the teachers and I felt that the intervention plan could be improved.

As a result, several steps were taken to improve the reading intervention program for the 2010-2011 school year. First, I provided professional development to all kindergarten teachers to ensure that teachers had the background knowledge to implement differentiated reading strategies. Second, an intervention program was purchased to provide consistent instruction to at-risk students. Third, we reworked how we grouped children for interventions so that all students in the classroom received small group differentiated reading instruction. In addition, this instruction came from the child's teacher rather than from another Morris staff member so that the teacher was aware of each child's progress on a daily basis. Fourth, each teacher used the same instructional format for their intervention so that instruction was

consistent between all kindergarten classrooms. Finally, a new screening tool was developed to screen incoming kindergarten students so that heterogeneous classrooms could be created. This screening tool allowed me to ensure that the classroom was appropriately diverse academically without being too heavily weighted with students on the low or high end of the kindergarten instructional spectrum.

The data from 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 school years were then analyzed to measure the success of the changes to the intervention program. It became evident that the changes in the interventions resulted in higher student achievement for all demographic groups of kindergarten students.

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT, IMPROVEMENT GOALS

1.1 Background and Context

Morris Early Childhood Center houses pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. Morris Early Childhood Center is located in the Milford School District, located in northern Sussex County and southern Kent County Delaware. The majority of the district's students come from the town of Milford which has a population of 9559. Most of Milford School district is considered rural. The largest employers in Milford are Milford Memorial Hospital, Dent Supply Caulk, and Seawatch. Most of the positions at these companies involve manual labor rather than white collar positions. The town's demographics are shown in the table below.

Table 1.1: 2012 Town of Milford Demographics (2013)

Race	Percentage
White alone	59.1%
Black alone	21.5%
Hispanic	15.8%
Two or more races	1.9%
Asian	1.0%
American Indian alone	0.3%
Other race alone	0.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.06%

Milford School District consists of seven schools. The grade configurations are shown in Table 2.

Table 1.2: Milford School District Grade Configurations

School	Grades Housed in School	2013 Enrollment
Morris Early Childhood Center	Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten	477
Banneker Elementary	Grades 1-5	525
Misphillion Elementary	Grades 1-5	570
Ross Elementary	Grades 1-5	571
Milford Central Academy	Grades 6-8	981
Milford Senior High School	Grades 9-12	1049
Total K -12 Enrollment		4173

1.2 Adopted Curriculum at the Elementary Level

Milford School District uses the Journeys Houghton Mifflin reading program as its core reading program and Envisions as its core math program. The Smithsonian Science kits are used as the core science program. There is no adopted curriculum for social studies or writing at the elementary level. Currently, teachers use the common core writing standards along with the Six-Traits writing model to develop writing lessons. Teachers embed the Delaware Social Studies kindergarten standards in the Houghton Mifflin reading program.

Kindergarten programming has been guided by the Delaware Content Standards, although with the 2012 adoption by the state of the Common Core Standards curriculum, curriculum revision and teacher training will be needed to align our curriculum with these new standards. This is an ongoing effort.

1.3 Morris Early Childhood Center (MECC) Kindergarten Classroom Configurations

MECC's kindergarten program is a full day program. There is one self-contained kindergarten classroom, 4 regular education classrooms, 6 inclusion classrooms, 2 Team Approach to Mastery (TAM) classrooms, and 3 English Language Learners (ELL) classrooms. Team Approach to Mastery classrooms are classrooms that have two teachers in the classroom. One or both of the teachers are certified in special education. English Language Learners are students whose primary language is not English.

The self-contained classroom has 7 students who have been identified with significant developmental delays such as autism and Down syndrome. It is taught by a teacher certified in special education and autism. The regular education classrooms are taught by teachers who have certification in early childhood education. There are no identified special education students placed in those classrooms. There are 22-23 students in each classroom.

The inclusion classrooms are taught by a teacher who is dually certified in early childhood education and special education. There are 2-3 special education students in those classrooms and 18-19 regular education students. Those special education students have Individual Education Plan (IEPs) goals that meet regular kindergarten curriculum requirements.

The TAM classrooms are taught by an early childhood education certified teacher and a special education certified teacher. There are 5-6 special education students and 16-17 regular education students in these TAM classrooms. These special education students have IEP goals that meet regular kindergarten curriculum requirements. However, they also include behavior support plans and/or extra adult assistance in order to meet these goals.

The ELL classrooms are taught by teachers who are certified in early childhood

education. There are 6 ELL students and 16-17 regular education students in each of these classrooms. These three classrooms have a para-professional who is bi-lingual in Spanish and who joins each classroom for one and one half hours each day for small group reading and writing support. The ELL students are also provided interventions from the building reading specialist for 30 minutes four times a week.

MECC also houses the special needs pre-kindergarten program. The pre-kindergarten program consists of 67 three and four year old students who have been identified with special education needs.

MECC has a diverse population that closely matches the town of Milford's demographics. Demographic characteristics of the student population of Milford School District and MECC are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1.3: 2012-2013 Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Milford School District	Morris ECC
African American	25.5%	28.0%
American Indian	0.9%	0.8%
Asian	0.9%	0.3%
Multi-Racial	3.4%	1.5%
Hispanic/Latino	17.3%	20.9%
White	51.8%	48.6%

Table 1.4: 2012-2013 Other Student Characteristics

Other Student Characteristics	Milford School District	Morris ECC
English Language Learner	7.7%	19.2%
Low Income	57.7%	70%
Special Education	13.2%	9.7%

1.4 Problem Statement: The Challenge of Developing an Efficient and Effective Reading Intervention Program for MECC

1.4.1 MECC's Mission and Instructional Challenge

MECC's mission is to ensure that each student leaves kindergarten meeting kindergarten Common Core State Standards, meeting Milford School District's promotion standards, and achieving at least one year's growth in literacy. Achieving this mission is difficult because Common Core State Standards and Milford School District's promotion standards are rigorous. This rigor is demonstrated with one Common Core reading foundational standard which requires students to, "know and apply grade level phonics to decode words with long and short vowel sounds" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

MECC's kindergarten students enter kindergarten ranging widely in reading readiness. In September of 2011, 51% of our students began kindergarten with little or no readiness to read. Some had never held a pencil, could not recognize letters or letter sounds, and had no concept of print. On the other end of the reading ability spectrum were students who read independently at a second grade level. In September of 2011, 4% of incoming kindergarten students were reading at a second grade level. In between were students at different levels in vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, and concepts of print. This large number of non-readers and this broad range of reading abilities in our school and in classroom created big challenges for teachers.

An additional challenge facing MECC was that the numbers of disadvantaged students over recent years had been climbing. For instance, in 2008, 46% of Kindergartners were classified as low income; this rose to 70% in 2013. Over same period of time, there

was more than a 20% increase in the percentage of students who were Hispanic, growing from 17% to 21% of our enrollment. This presented a significant challenge to MECC because, “Low-income children consistently fall behind their peers in test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment, and other measures of academic success” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2002, p.1). In addition, “Before even entering kindergarten, the average cognitive score of children in the highest SES group are 60% above the scores of the lowest SES group” (Burkam and Lee, 2002, p. 1). The increase in the minority population at MECC was also significant because Burkam and Lee (2002) go on to state that, “Race and ethnicity are associated with SES. For example, 34% of black children and 29% of Hispanic children were in the lowest quintile of SES compared with only 9% of white children. Consequently, more students were coming to kindergarten with significant delays in kindergarten readiness skills.

1.4.2 Changes Starting in 2009

I became principal of Morris Early Childhood Center (MECC) in 2009. Prior to 2009 MECC did not have any sort of school-wide, systematic program in place for reading instruction. One reason for this was that there had been a lack of consistency in administration for the past five years. In each of the previous years, there was either a new principal or assistant principal in the building. Additionally, the district did not staff the assistant principal position at MECC during the 2009-2010 school year. This was because plans were being made to move the first grade to another building, making MECC a pre-kindergarten/kindergarten building. District officials were unsure if MECC would qualify for an assistant principal with that new grade configuration and therefore, did not want to

commit a person to that position for only one year.

My first year was especially demanding as a lone administrator to try and ensure that all aspects of instruction, management, discipline, and parent contact were performed effectively. Consistent and stable leadership is essential to create a high quality school program. This is supported by the Wallace Foundation which states, “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school related factors that affect learning in school” Wallace Foundation (2012), *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*. Therefore, without strong, consistent leadership it was difficult for MECC to have a clear vision for instruction and to establish consistent goals.

Also prior to my arrival as principal, in the previous years there had been very little professional development in literacy. Classroom management was the main target of professional development. The building administration relied on teachers using the adopted reading curriculum to sufficiently meet the student’s literacy needs. Teachers were permitted to embed reading skills and strategies as they used the reading curriculum materials.

This created a lack of consistency in literacy instruction throughout the school. What was in place was largely a teacher-driven curriculum with little leadership. At MECC, teachers generally worked quite independently in their classroom, making their own decisions about instructional strategies, relying mostly on whole group instruction with school-adopted readers.

In addition, in the past there were no standardized assessments in place to monitor individual student progress. Data-driven practice was not employed and was an unfamiliar concept. These conditions are not uncommon in schools that operate in the absence of strong and committed leadership who commit to putting in place a unified, standards-based

instructional program.

This was the organizational context when I arrived in 2009. One of my first and largest challenges began in my first year, with the directive to implement “Response to Intervention” (RtI).

1.4.3 Improvement Process and Goals

As principal, I am the instructional leader. I must ensure that students at MECC receive high quality instruction so that children leave kindergarten with the pre-requisite skills for first grade. As a result, I must evaluate our intervention programs, oversee school operations, and lead improvements to ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction to be ready for first grade. This EPP provides an analysis and an account of my three years working to strengthen our reading program and improve student outcomes in literacy. For the most part, my efforts have revolved around implementing RtI.

1.4.4 Key Principles of “Response to Intervention” (RtI)

“Response to Intervention” came on the scene nationally when it was prescribed in the 2004 reauthorization of the federal “Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act” legislation. RtI requires targeted reading interventions aimed at helping all students reach grade level standards in reading as measure by an approved reading assessment. Here are several definitions of RtI from the National Dissemination Center for Children With Disabilities:

RtI is a general education framework that involves research-based instruction and interventions, regular monitoring of student progress and the subsequent

use of this data over time to make educational decisions. Key to the RTI process is the application of scientifically based interventions that have been demonstrated to work in randomized controlled trials. A goal of the RTI process is to apply accountability to educational program by focusing on programs that work rather than programs that simply look, sound, or feel good (2012) “*Response to Intervention*”.

Another descriptive summary comes from the National Center on RTI:

With RtI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (NCRTI, 2010, p. 2).

The American Institute for Research also defines RtI:

RtI uses data-based decision making that employs screening and progress monitoring data to prescribe supplementary interventions for students who do not respond to core instruction. Data from universal screeners should be used to identify at-risk students whose progress is then monitored. American Institute for Research (2013), *Using a Response to Intervention Framework to Improve Student Learning*.

Each school must identify a universal screening tool. The universal screener is administered at the beginning, the middle, and the end of each school year. Based on the students’ scores on the universal screener, students are divided into three “tiers”.

- 1) Tier 1 / Primary Prevention: High quality core instruction that meets the needs of most students.

- 2) Tier 2 / Secondary Prevention: Evidence-based interventions that target the instructional needs of these students.
- 3) Tier 3 / Tertiary Prevention: Individual or small group interventions for students who have shown minimal progress to Tier 2 interventions.

1.4.5 MECC's Challenge: Achievement Literacy Standards for Our Kindergartners

MECC's goal is for all our kindergarten students to make one year's growth as measured by our reading assessments. In MECC, we use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills "DIBELS" and STAR assessments (as explained next chapter). Data from these assessments are used to determine what reading interventions are needed by each student and to determine the effectiveness of the interventions.

Students who at the lowest end of the reading spectrum are expected to achieve "benchmark" based on DIBELS assessments which measures fluency and pre-reading skills. Measurement of students at the upper end of the continuum is supplemented with the STAR Early Literacy assessment – a computer-adaptive diagnostic assessment of key early literacy skills as well as reading comprehension.

This EPP is about my and MECC's efforts to implement RtI as effectively as possible to help all our children learn to read. This EPP describes and evaluates our efforts to achieve this goal by improving scheduling to maximize instructional time, by strengthening professional development opportunities, and by more effectively individualizing reading instruction through differentiated grouping.

Chapter 2

STARTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: YEARS ONE AND TWO

2.1 How RtI was Implemented in 2009-2010 School Year

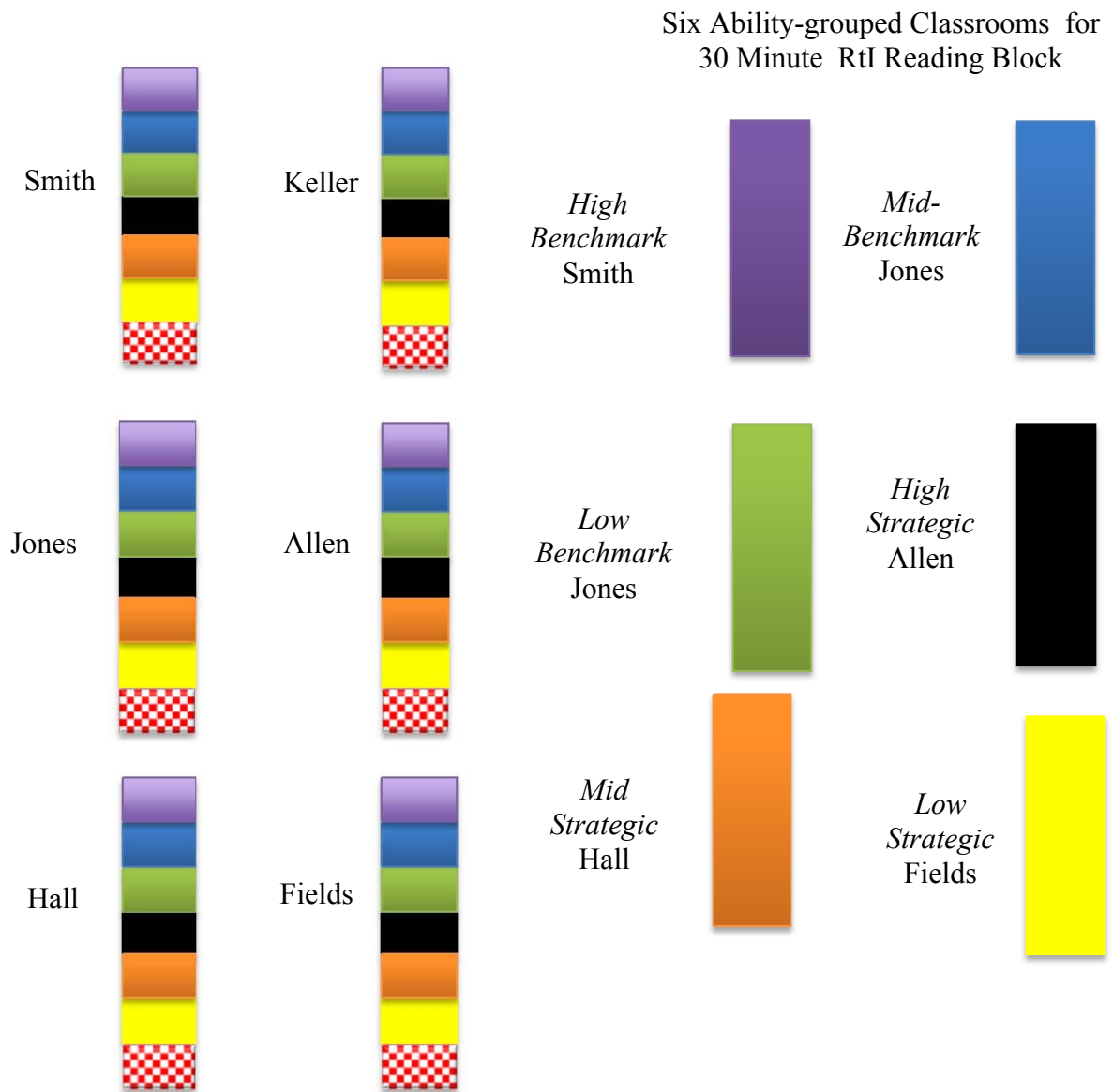
This section describes how RtI for reading instruction was organized during the 2009 - 2010 school year.

The school's 18 kindergarten and first grade classrooms were grouped into 3 teams of 6 classrooms each.¹ Each team (6 classrooms) used the same grouping shown in Figure 1.

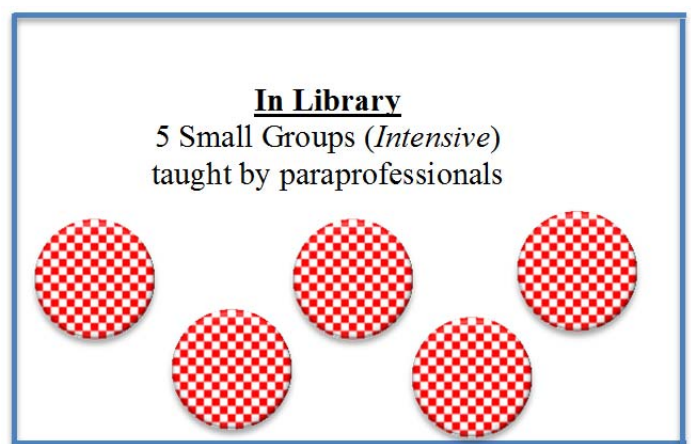
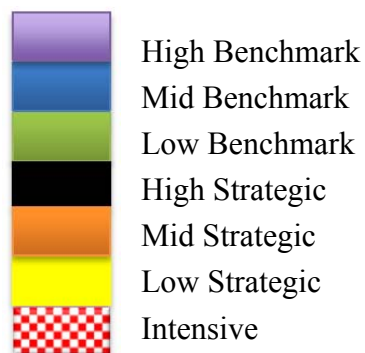
Figure 1 shows how the grouping arrangement operated for one of the teams.

¹ In 2009, MECC had some first grade classrooms. In 2011, all first grade classrooms were moved out of MECC and to the district's elementary schools.

Figure 2.1: Diagram of 2009-2010 RtI Model



LEGEND



This is how instruction in the reading block operated:

- 1) Every “homeroom” classroom had a heterogeneous mixture of students.
kindergarten registration process. Kindergarten registration begins in March for the following school year. Our goal is to have 90% of incoming kindergarten students registered by the end of June. However, students continue to arrive and register for kindergarten through the end of August. When students register, a time is scheduled for the student to take a reading assessment to help us plan for classroom grouping for the following September. Our policy is to have a diverse mixture of students in each classroom, with 22 students per class. Based on a kindergarten assessment tool created by the MECC teachers, children are classified in one of three categories: *red* (lowest level), *yellow* (middle level), and *green* (highest level – this can be considered reading at a level appropriate for 5 year olds). My placement goal for each classroom is 6-7 red students, 8-10 yellow students, and 8-10 green students. The kindergarten assessment tool includes literacy skills of upper and lower case letter identification, letter sound identification, name writing, and ability to converse verbally.
- 2) At the beginning of the year, in early September, the students are tested with the DIBELS reading assessment. DIBELS stands for “Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills”. This assessment serves two purposes:
 - *Reading group placement*: the students will be ability-grouped for their daily reading period (“reading intervention block”) and this ability grouping must be based on a current assessment.

- *As a pre-test to create a baseline to monitor growth over the course of the school year.* The students will be tested two more times – in winter and again in spring to allow us to monitor their reading progress and plan instruction and tailor it to individual students’ needs.
- 3) In the 2009 school year intervention model, students’ September DIBELS scores were used to group the students into six ability groups for the 35 minute duration of the reading intervention block. This grouping system is illustrated in Figure 3, the columns on the left illustrating the six heterogeneous homeroom classrooms (teachers’ names are fictitious). Every classroom had seven levels of students based on their reading ability as measured by the DIBELS assessment.
- Highest benchmark level
 - Middle benchmark level
 - Low benchmark level
 - High strategic level
 - Middle strategic level
 - Low strategic level
 - Intensive level
- 4) For the 35 minute reading block each day, all the students in each of the classrooms received reading instruction in their homogenous reading-ability groups. Thus, all the students went to some other classroom (or remained in their own classroom, if that was where their ability group met). The students in the “benchmark” and “strategic” reading levels went to one of six other classrooms matching their reading levels.

- 5) The class sizes in the benchmark and strategic level classrooms ranged from 14-22 students. Table 5 shows the numbers in each classroom. The composition of these groups was somewhat fluid because students sometimes changed intervention groups based on data on their progress. However, the total enrollment numbers in each classroom remained consistent.

Table 2.1: Enrollment Sizes of Reading Block Classroom Groups

Group Classification	Number of Students
Highest benchmark level	14-16
Middle benchmark level	20-24
Low benchmark level	20-24
High strategic level	20-24
Middle strategic level	20-24
Low strategic level	14-16

- 6) Students reading at the *intensive* level all went to the library where they were further divided into small groups (3-5 students) for individualized reading instruction. Each small group was taught by a paraprofessional.
- 7) For the reading intervention block each teacher (Figures 3, groupings on the right) did their own planning for their specific RtI group. Materials from the Florida Center for Reading Research were used by all teachers. Teachers also used resources they currently had from their own classrooms. These included resources found on other internet sites or materials from the MECC library. Neither Milford School District nor MECC in 2009 purchased specific intervention materials for the RtI groups.
- 8) Instruction in each of the reading block classrooms was different. As noted in #7 above, there was variation in materials used across the classrooms; also,

instructional methods varied among the classrooms. The benchmark groups, particularly the high benchmark group, did more comprehension activities while the strategic groups focused on more phonemic awareness and phonics activities. This was because the benchmark groups had already mastered necessary phonemic awareness and phonics skills and was therefore more ready to target comprehension skills.

- 9) After the mid-year DIBELS testing, we held “data days.” The reading specialist, the classroom teacher, and I looked at the data together for each classroom and determined if students needed to move to a different RtI group. The majority of students did improve. As a result, in January, four of the six classrooms changed. We no longer needed to separate the middle/low strategic students from the middle/low benchmark students. The achievement gap had closed between the majority of these children. As a result, the separate low strategic, middle strategic, and low benchmark classrooms were now on the same instructional levels as each other. Table 2.2 illustrates the classroom formations from January to May.

Table 2.2: Enrollment Sizes of Reading Block Classroom Groups

Group Classification	Number of Students
Highest Benchmark level	14-16
Low/Middle Benchmark level	20-24
Low/Middle Benchmark level	20-24
Low/Middle Benchmark level	20-24
Low/Middle Benchmark level	20-24
Low strategic level	14-16

10) The numbers of intensive students also decreased in the January benchmarking.

Rather than move all of those students back into one of the homogenously grouped classrooms, however, the majority of those students remained in the library to receive their RtI intervention. This was done because the teacher, reading teacher, and I believed that the students made this progress because of the small group format. We believed that if these students were moved to a classroom with 24 students, then they would be unable to continue to improve.

2.2 Shortcoming of the 2009 Intervention Model for Reading Block

In the spring of 2010, I wanted to get feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the current RtI program from each group of RtI instructors. As a result, I created interview questions for para-professionals, teachers, building reading specialist, and principal from a different early childhood center. I interviewed three para-professionals, six teachers (two teachers from each RtI team), MECC's one reading specialist, and Sherri Kijowski, principal of MacIlvaine Early Childhood Center in the Caesar Rodney School District. The interview questions are found in Appendices A-D.

The results of the interviews showed that although students had made instructional gains in Low/Middle Benchmark level, the MECC staff and I had several concerns about this model.

- 1) The neediest groups of students – those in the Intensive group in the library – were being instructed by the least trained staff – the para-professionals. The paraprofessionals had no training in the RtI intervention system.

- 2) The other RtI classroom groups were too large (those above the intensive level).
Only the intensive students received small group instruction. Because the other RtI classrooms were large, it was difficult for the teachers to target skills that each child needed. This was especially true once the low/middle benchmark groups and low/middle strategic groups were combined.
- 3) There was inadequate communication among teachers who shared students (i.e., the child's homeroom teacher and the child's RtI teacher). This is because there was no time built into the day for teachers to meet and discuss students' progress. The only way for each teacher to share information about the students in the RtI groups was before or after school or in the form of e-mails or ad hoc conversations. Consequently, a child in an RtI class might be having difficulties or not making adequate progress in reading, yet it could be weeks before that information was communicated to the child's homeroom teacher. This happened too often and led to frustration among the teachers.
- 4) Although teachers all had instructional materials from the Florida Center for Reading Research, there ended up being excessive variation from classroom to classroom in teachers' reading intervention methods. This was because teachers also relied a lot on their own sources of instructional materials obtained from sources including the MECC library and internet sites. In addition, each teacher created his/her own lesson plans and determined which skills to target. Thus, there was little consistency in instruction. For example, teachers who were more knowledgeable about literacy instruction were able to identify resources that directly targeted students' areas of weaknesses. Teachers with less experience or

who had less knowledge about phonics or phonemic awareness could struggle with identifying resources appropriate for their student's instructional needs. This was demonstrated by one teacher who was working with the low strategic group and could not understand why the children weren't able to master phoneme segmentation even though she had been using materials targeting that skill. After looking at the children's data, it was evident that the children were missing a pre-requisite skill and the teacher had been using resources that were beyond that skill.

At the end of each school year I reflect on the past year and discuss with my teachers possible changes and ways we might improve. Because of the above-described deficiencies with the 2009-2010 model, we decided we needed to make changes. The biggest shift was our recognition of the need to implement differentiated instruction *within the classroom* and to lengthen the amount of time each day allocated to the reading block. The next section describes the significant changes to the RtI intervention model implemented for the 2010-2011 school year.

2.3 How RtI was Implemented in 2010-2011 School Year

During the summer of 2010 all MECC teachers received professional development on RtI. The professional development was based on an RtI model from How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction (Walpole, and McKenna, 2006). The teachers learned how to incorporate fluency, targeted skill instruction, and guided reading in a differentiated model. This led to four major changes in the organization and delivery of the RtI reading block. Table 7 shows this arrangement.

- all students remained in their homeroom class from for the reading intervention block;
- teachers in each classroom arranged their students into three groups of common reading ability (based on the students' scores on the DIBELS test);
- the teacher along with a paraprofessional gave individualized instruction to each group while the reading tutor assisted the students in the reading practice stations;
- the reading block was increased from 30 to 60 minutes.

Table 2.3: The 60 Minute Reading Block: How RtI Operates in Each Classroom

Block	Teacher	Para-Professional	Reading Practice Stations
First 20 Minute Block	Intensive Group 20 Minutes	Strategic Group 20 Minutes	Benchmark Group 20 Minutes
Second 20 Minute Block	Benchmark Group 20 Minutes	Intensive Group 20 Minutes	Strategic Group 20 Minutes
Third 20 Minute Block	Strategic Group 20 Minutes	Benchmark Group 20 Minutes	Intensive Group 20 Minutes

Following is a more detailed explanation of the 60 minute reading block implemented in 2010.

- 1) In 2009, the reading intervention was 35 Low/Middle Benchmark level minutes of instruction. In 2010, we almost doubled the time for reading to 60 minutes. We were able to add 30 minutes to the RtI reading block because I decided to have science instruction occur only on Fridays during the RtI reading block. On Fridays, the para-professionals pulled the children from their classrooms throughout the day to do RtI progress monitoring. This left the 60 minute RtI reading block open. Previously, teachers had to embed science instruction into their daily schedule. However, the science kit activities frequently took longer

than 20-30 minutes. As a result, teachers now had an uninterrupted 90 minute block on Fridays for science instruction.

- 2) Teachers developed small groups for individualized reading instruction. A typical classroom had three groups, with 4-8 students in each group. The groupings were determined by the students' latest scores on the DIBELS test. This grouping system enabled all the students in a group to be working with reading material targeted at their reading ability level.
- 3) In each classroom, for the entire 60 minute reading block, three adults provided instruction: the teacher, a reading tutor, and a para professional. The students rotated between the teacher, the reading tutor, and the para professional every 20 minutes. The teacher followed the same instructional format for each of her 20 minute groups. The teacher's instructional role is shown in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Instructional Format for Each of the Three Teacher-Led RtI Groups

Minutes	Instructional Focus
2-3 minutes	Fluency
7-8 minutes	Targeted Skill
10 minutes	Leveled Reader

During the fluency portion of the lesson, the teacher focuses on letter naming fluency, sight word fluency, and sentence reading fluency. The teacher provides instruction in a phonemic awareness or phonics skill during the targeted skill portion of the lesson. The teacher determines which skills to target based on areas of weakness by each homogeneous group. During the leveled reading portion of the lesson, students read books that are appropriate to their instructional reading level. Teachers embed comprehension skills with fluency and phonics skills in this instructional block.

The para-professional focused on a phonemic awareness skill or a phonics skill for each 15 minute block. The targeted skill was determined by the DIBELS assessment. For example, if the children were unable to initial sounds in words, then the para-professional targeted phonemic awareness activities. Phonics skills such as blending sounds to make words were used with children who were more advanced.

The reading tutor assisted and monitored the students who were working in the reading practice stations. The reading practice stations were designed and created by the teachers. The stations targeted phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading comprehension skills. The reading practice stations consisted of “hands-on” activities that the children completed with minimal adult supervision. All reading practice stations were introduced by the teacher to the whole class before students went individually to their reading stations. Here is an example of a reading practice station phonics activity, called “Reader/Writer.” One student would read consonant/vowel/consonant words on index cards to a partner. The partner then had to write those words on a dry erase board. The pair then checked that the word on the card matched the word on the dry erase board. The reading tutor helped keep the children on task, checked for accuracy and understanding, and was available to offer instruction and guidance as needed.

This professional development created greater consistency in RtI methods among teachers across the kindergarten classrooms. This consistency was evident in three ways:

- 1) Each teacher followed the fluency/skill/guided reading format for each of their groups.
- 2) Every student received 20 minutes of small group differentiated reading instruction from the teacher.

3) Reading practice stations were implemented in each classroom.

The new RtI format was challenging for the teachers because it resulted in more planning since they now had to plan for three small groups during RtI rather than just one group. However, the data between the 2009-2010 school year and the data from the 2010-2011 school year demonstrates that the 2010-2011 format of RtI resulted in a greater number of students achieving Benchmark status on the end of year DIBELS and STAR assessments.

Chapter 3

ASSESSING RESULTS OF YEARS ONE AND TWO IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

3.1 Overview

Morris Early Childhood Center began its implementation of RtI in 2009. During this initial phase, RtI consisted of grouping kindergarten children for reading intervention for 35 minutes daily. The teachers used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data and their discretion to group the children. Small group instruction did not occur. Instead, each teacher had a classroom of 20-22 children grouped homogenously for the 35-minute intervention block.

Starting in 2010-2011, we implemented several vital changes in how we implemented RtI. First, all children remained in their kindergarten classrooms during the RtI block and a para-professional and reading tutor were pushed into each classroom. The RtI block was extended from 35 minutes to 60 minutes. Children received targeted skill intervention for three 20-minute blocks during the 60-minute intervention block. The children rotated between the teacher, the para-professional, and reading practice stations that were overseen by the reading tutor. The DIBELS assessment was used as the screening assessment. Based on the DIBELS data, we grouped children into their three intervention groups.

This analysis collected data to learn if the change in the way RtI was implemented during the 2010-2011 school year was more effective than the way RtI was implemented during the 2009-2010 school year. End of year DIBELS results were used to assess reading gains and compare results of the 2010 RtI model to the 2009 RtI model.

Results indicated greater reading gains associated with the 2010-2011 RtI

implementation model.

- 1) More kindergarten and first grade students maintained benchmark than the prior year.
- 2) A greater number of students moved from intensive to strategic and strategic to benchmark during the 2010-2011 school year.
- 3) Fewer children moved from benchmark to strategic or intensive as well.

The following presents the analyses and these results along with an additional section based on interview results and feedback from staff.

3.2 Background

RtI required use of assessment data to identify students' reading level, monitor their growth in reading over the school year, and plan and deliver reading interventions. In MECC, all students are assessed three times a year on basic literacy skills: the first assessment occurs in the first week of September, the second in mid-January, and the third in mid-May.

Each school district must identify a literacy-screening device for grades K-3. The reading assessment Milford School District chose is the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment. DIBELS is also used to monitor progress of students receiving intervention instruction.

3.3 The DIBELS Assessments

MECC uses the *DIBELS Sixth Edition* during the 2009-2010 school year and *DIBELS Next* during the 2010-2011 school year. Because there are some differences in the features of

these two versions of DIBELS, I will start by explaining what DIBELS is as an assessment and differences between the two versions.

Changes to Kindergarten DIBELS Next. There are new benchmark goals for DIBELS Next:

- The Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) measure has been replaced by a new measure, FSF.
- Letter naming fluency is no longer progress monitored.

Changes to First Grade DIBELS Next:

- The (Words Recoded Completely) WRC score of Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) has been eliminated. A new score Whole Words Read (WWR) has been added to NWF. The Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) score remains the same.
- The Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) passages are all new. These passages have been leveled using new readability procedures.
- ORF scores now include both a retelling and an error count. The error count is used in calculating accuracy rates.
- Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) is not administered in the winter and spring of 1st grade.

3.4 DIBELS Sixth Edition Kindergarten (Used in 2009-2010 School Year)

DIBELS Sixth Edition consists of four assessments at the kindergarten level.

(“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010). These assessments are letter naming fluency, initial sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency.

- Letter Naming Fluency: knowing the names of letters
- Initial Sound Fluency: being able to recognize and produce the initial sound in an

orally presented word

- Phoneme Segmentation Fluency: the ability to breakdown three and four phoneme words into their individual phonemes
- Nonsense Word Fluency: the ability to associate sounds to letters and use the sounds to blend together to make words. These words are all consonant/vowel/consonant words.

The kindergarten tests and the scores and status of each DIBELS Sixth Edition subtest are listed in the table below (“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010).

Table 3.1: Kindergarten DIBELS Sixth Edition Measures

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year Months 1-3		Middle of Year Months 4-6		End of Year Months 7-10	
	Scores	Status	Scores	Status	Scores	Status
ISF	0-3 4-7 8 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-9 10-24 25 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	Not administered during this assessment period	
LNF	0-1 2-7 8 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-14 15-26 27 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-28 29-39 40 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk
PSF	Not administered during this assessment period		0-6 7-17 18 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
NWF (NWF-CLS Score)	Not administered during this assessment period		0-4 5-12 13 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-14 15-24 25 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

3.5 DIBELS Sixth Edition First Grade (Used in 2009-2010 School Year)

First grade assessments are letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and oral reading fluency.

- Oral Reading Fluency: the ability to decode letters, sounds, and words and make meaning from the text.

The first grade tests and the scores and status of each subtest are listed in the table below (“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010).

Table 3.2: First Grade DIBELS Sixth Edition Measures

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year Months 1-3		Middle of Year Months 4-6		End of Year Months 7-10	
	Scores	Status	Scores	Status	Scores	Status
LNF	0-24 25-36 37 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	Not administered during this assessment period		Not administered during this assessment period	
PSF	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
NWF (NWF-CLS Score)	0-12 13-23 24 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-29 30-49 50 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-29 30-49 50 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
ORF Words Correct	Not administered during this assessment period		0-7 8-19 20 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-19 20-39 40 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

Students are given a status label for their performance on each DIBELS subtest.

These labels are:

- Low risk/Established: The child scored at or above the expected score for that grade.
- Some risk/Emerging: The child scored a little below the expected score for that grade and will need support in this targeted area of literacy.
- At risk/Deficit: The child scored well below the expected score for the grade and needs help in this targeted area.

A composite score is then given to each child based on the compilation of each subtest score. The possible composite scores are:

- Benchmark: Children have reached the expected composite score for that grade level. Students will receive core instruction using the Milford reading curriculum.
- Strategic: Children have not met the benchmark score criteria, but have met a minimal score. Targeted reading interventions will need to occur.
- Intensive: Children have not met the strategic or benchmark score criteria and will require targeted reading interventions.

3.6 DIBELS Next Kindergarten (Used in 2010-2011 School Year)

DIBELS Next consists of three assessments at the kindergarten level. (“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010) DIBELS Next and DIBELS Sixth Edition use the same status labels. These assessments are letter naming fluency, initial sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency.

- First Sound Fluency: being able to recognize and produce the initial sound in an orally presented word
- Phoneme Segmentation Fluency: the ability to breakdown three and four phoneme words into their individual phonemes
- Nonsense Word Fluency: the ability to associate sounds to letters and use the sounds to blend together to make words. These words are all consonant/vowel/consonant words.

The kindergarten tests and the scores and status of each DIBELS Next subtest are listed in the Table 3.3 (“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010).

Table 3.3: Kindergarten DIBELS Next Measures

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year Months 1-3		Middle of Year Months 4-6		End of Year Months 7-10	
	Scores	Status	Scores	Status	Scores	Status
FSF	0-4 5-9 10 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-19 20-29 30 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	Not administered during this assessment period	
PSF	Not administered during this assessment period		0-9 10-19 20 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-19 25-39 40 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
NWF (NWF-CLS Score)	Not administered during this assessment period		0-7 8-16 17 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-14 15-27 28 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk

3.7 DIBELS Next First Grade (Used in 2010-2011 School Year)

First grade assessments are phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency whole words read (WWR), nonsense word fluency correct letter sounds (CLS), oral reading fluency words correct, oral reading fluency accuracy, and oral reading fluency retell.

- Nonsense Word Fluency CLS: the ability to associate sounds to letters.
- Nonsense Word Fluency WWR: the ability to read whole consonant/vowel/consonant words.
- Oral Reading Fluency words correct: the number of words in a given passage that a child reads correctly.
- Oral Reading Fluency accuracy: the number of words in a given passage that a child reads correctly divided by the total number of words read including words read incorrectly.
- Oral Reading Fluency retell: the number of words a child can use to retell the passage that was read

The first grade tests and the scores and status of each subtest are listed in the table below (“DIBELS benchmark goals,” 2010).

Table 3.4: First Grade DIBELS Next Measures

DIBELS Measure	Beginning of Year Months 1-3		Middle of Year Months 4-6		End of Year Months 7-10	
	Scores	Status	Scores	Status	Scores	Status
PSF	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-9 10-34 35 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
NWF (NWF-CLS Score)	0-12 13-23 24 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-29 30-49 50 or above	Deficit Emerging Established	0-29 30-49 50 or above	Deficit Emerging Established
ORF Words Correct	Not administered during this assessment period		0-7 8-19 20 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0-19 20-39 40 or above	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk
ORF Accuracy	Not administered during this assessment period		0%-67% 68%-77% 78% +	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk	0%-81% 82%-89% 90% +	At Risk Some Risk Low Risk
ORF Retell	Not administered during this assessment period		Not administered during this assessment period		Optional per administrator	

3.8 Reasons for Changing from DIBELS Sixth Edition (2009) to DIBELS Next (2010)

After discussion with the building reading specialists and teachers, I decided to change from DIBELS Sixth Edition to DIBELS Next for several reasons:

- 1) In DIBELS Sixth Edition, the initial sound fluency measure relied largely on auditory listening skills. This is because in the initial sound fluency measure, children were shown an 8 ½ inch by 11 inch page with four different pictures. Each picture was drawn in a quadrant and was identified orally by the teacher. The children had to listen to each word and then find the picture of one word

beginning with a certain sound. If the child did not have good auditory memory skills, they could have forgotten the name of the first picture and therefore, not been able to identify the first letter sound. In contrast, DIBELS Next replaced the ISF assessment with First Sound Fluency. In the first sound fluency measure, children listen to one word that is stated orally by the teacher. The children then have to recreate the first sound that is made in the word. For example, if the teacher says “sun”, the child should respond /s/.” Thus, both Morris’ administration and reading specialist believed that the results of the FSF assessment gave a more accurate picture of a child’s understanding of the first sound in words.

- 2) There was no comprehension measure in DIBELS Sixth Edition. This is remedied by DIBELS Next as DIBELS Next adds the retelling component to the ORF assessment. After reading the ORF passage, the children have to retell what they have just read in the ORF paragraph. The entire purpose of children reading is to be able to comprehend what they read, so adding the retelling component was viewed as very important. It was one measure to help determine if a child was simply reading words or comprehending the meaning of the words.

3.9 DIBELS Results (2009 – 2011)

Tables 3.5 to 3.8 will illustrate the overall composite percentages for the kindergarten and first grade DIBELS assessments for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years:

Table 3.5: 2009-2010 End of Kindergarten DIBELS Data

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic	Percentage of Students Scoring Benchmark
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	3	11	85
Nonsense Word Fluency	8	28	62
Composite Score	14	16	70

Table 3.6: 2010-2011 End of Kindergarten DIBELS Data

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic	Percentage of Students Scoring Benchmark
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	6	7	87
Nonsense Word Fluency	5	11	85
Composite Score	8	11	81

Table 3.7: 2009-2010 End of First Grade DIBELS Data

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic	Percentage of Students Scoring Benchmark
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	0	5	93
Nonsense Word Fluency	7	30	63
Composite Score	16	20	64

Table 3.8: 2010-2011 End of First Grade DIBELS Data

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic	Percentage of Students Scoring Benchmark
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency	6	7	87
Nonsense Word Fluency	5	11	85
Composite Score	12	22	66

These kindergarten results reveal that the 2010-2011 school year intervention model showed more success in having children achieve a composite benchmark score. These gains were made even with the differences in cut scores as described in Tables 1.1 and 1.3.

Although growth between intensive, strategic, and benchmark cannot be determined in these tables, it is important to share because the district administration was pleased with the change from 70% composite benchmark to 81% composite benchmark. This is because the district's goal is for 85% of all kindergarten children to achieve a composite score of benchmark.

These first grade results reveal that the 2010-2011 school year intervention model showed more success in having children achieve a composite benchmark score. Milford School district administration looked positively on the difference of 2% on the composite benchmark score. The district superintendent looked at it as an increase between the two school years. However, because of the change between the DIBELS assessments used in each school year, 2% is not statistically significant. The superintendent was not concerned about the changes between the two DIBELS years. This is because she wanted to see upward movement in scores that could be shared to the Milford School District Board of Education. The superintendent privately told the MECC staff that she hoped more reading improvement would occur in the future but felt good about the fact that scores had increased, no matter how insignificantly.

3.10 Movement of Students between DIBELS Performance Levels

The Tables 3.9 and 3.10 describe the numbers and percentages of students who made positive changes in their performance levels (maintaining benchmark, moving from strategic to benchmark, and moving from intensive to strategic or benchmark) on the end of year DIBELS assessments.

Table 3.9: Movement between Performance Levels in Kindergarten in
2009-2010 and 2010-2011

2009-2010			2010-2011		
Total of 292 Students	Number	Percent	Total of 318 Students	Number	Percent
Maintain Benchmark	92	32%	Maintain Benchmark	108	34%
Strategic to Benchmark	50	17%	Strategic to Benchmark	71	22%
Stayed Strategic	36	12%	Stayed Strategic	15	5%
Intensive to Strategic	35	12%	Intensive to Strategic	44	14%
Intensive to Benchmark	36	12%	Intensive to Benchmark	52	16%
Stayed Intensive	15	5%	Stayed Intensive	6	2%
Benchmark to Strategic	13	4%	Benchmark to Strategic	19	6%
Benchmark to Intensive	1	<1%	Benchmark to Intensive	0	0%
Strategic to Intensive	14	5%	Strategic to Intensive	3	1%

Table 3.10: Movement between Performance Levels in First Grade in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011

2009-2010			2010-2011		
Total of 342 Students	Number	Percent	Total of 326 Students	Number	Percent
Maintain Benchmark	138	40%	Maintain Benchmark	112	34%
Strategic to Benchmark	37	11%	Strategic to Benchmark	58	18%
Intensive to Strategic	33	10%	Intensive to Strategic	35	12%
Stayed Strategic	47	14%	Stayed Strategic	53	16%
Intensive to Benchmark	18	5%	Intensive to Benchmark	24	7%
Stayed Intensive	35	10%	Stayed Intensive	8	2%
Benchmark to Strategic	19	6%	Benchmark to Strategic	20	6%
Benchmark to Intensive	4	1%	Benchmark to Intensive	4	1%
Strategic to Intensive	11	3%	Strategic to Intensive	12	4%

3.11 Summary of Performance Level Movement Results in Kindergarten

These tables' quantitative results show more positive growth between performance levels during the 2010-2011 school year. A higher percentage of children moved from intensive to strategic, strategic to benchmark, and intensive to benchmark during the 2010-2011 school year than the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, the percentage of children who remained intensive both years decreased during the 2010-2011 school year from 5% to 2%.

There were some children who moved from higher performance levels to lower

performance levels in both school years. During the 2010-2011 school year, 6% of students moved from Benchmark to Strategic while only 4% did in the 2009-2010 school year. After discussing this result with teachers, it is possible that this increase of students moving from Benchmark to Strategic was a result of the Letter Naming Fluency measure not being progress monitored. Students had not been exposed to the format of the test since they were given the assessment in January. As a result, the staff felt that children could have read the letters more quickly if they were accustomed to the letter naming test format.

The children's familiarity with the testing format could have helped children show positive growth in their movement between performance levels as well. However, during the 2009-2010 school year, the children had this familiarity with the test format as well. Therefore, it can be assumed that this familiarity could be negated when comparing positive gains between school years. In addition, there was a 2%-5% gain in each positive performance level move. For example, in 2009-2010 17% of children moved from Strategic to Benchmark and 22% moved from Strategic to Benchmark in the 2010-2011 school year.

The positive gains that were made between the 2009-2010 school year and the 2010-2011 school years seems to have been made from children who had been in the "Stayed Strategic" and "Stayed Intensive" categories. This is because in the 2009-2010 school year, 12% stayed strategic while only 5% stayed strategic in the 2010-2011 school year. In addition, 5% stayed intensive in the 2009-2010 school year and 2 % stayed strategic in the 2010-2011 school year. As a result, my hypothesis predicting more children will achieve Benchmark status during the 2010-2011 school year was correct because the data demonstrates that more kindergarten children were able to make positive gains in their performance during the 2010-2011 school year.

3.12 Summary of Performance Level Movement Results in First Grade

The first grade data was not as conclusive in supporting my hypothesis as was the kindergarten data. This was because their 2010-2011 data showed gains relative to the 2009-2010 school year, but also had some categories without improvement. This was demonstrated in the amount of children who maintained benchmark status. Forty percent of children maintained benchmark status during the 2009-2010 school year, but only 34% maintained benchmark status during the 2010-2011 school year. In addition, 16% of the children remained strategic in the 2010-2011 school year while only 14% remained strategic in the 2009-2010 school year.

After discussing possible reasons for this with the first grade teachers and reading specialist, one explanation may be that the ORF measures attributed to less children maintaining benchmark and more children staying at the strategic performance level rather than showing a positive gain. The ORF assessment may be responsible for less students maintaining a Benchmark score because the ORF cut scores were changed. Forty words were required for a Benchmark score in 2009-2010 and 47 words were required for a Benchmark score in 2010-2011. These additional 7 words kept 19 children from achieving Benchmark status on the ORF Whole Words Correct measure in the 2010-2011 school year. If these 19 students were added to the 112 students who maintained Benchmark status, then 40% of the 2010=2011 first graders would have maintained Benchmark. This would have then equaled the percentage maintaining Benchmark during the 2009-2010 school year.

There were however, still positive gains between performance levels between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school year. This was demonstrated in the number of students who stayed intensive. In the 2009-2010 school year, 10% of the students stayed intensive

while only 2% stayed intensive in the 2010-2011 school year. In addition, 11% moved from Strategic to Benchmark during the 2009-2010 school year, while 18% moved from Strategic to Benchmark during the 2010-2011 school year. These percentages were looked at very positively by the district administration because it showed demonstrated the lowest performing students had made more positive growth during the 2010-2011 school year. Consequently, my hypothesis was also supported by the first grade data because more positive gains were made during the 2010-2011 school year than negative movement.

Chapter 4

THE NEED TO DEVELOP A TIER 2 INTERVENTION PROGRAM

4.1 Purpose and Overview

Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, Morris Early Childhood Center's (MECC) had no specific intervention program for its Tier 2 children. This resulted in a lack of consistency in intervention instruction between classrooms. As a result, as the building principal and instructional leader, I needed to identify an effective Tier 2 intervention program and ensure that it was implemented with fidelity. This chapter describes our efforts to identify and implement an "Evidence-based intervention" model for our Tier 2 instruction.

4.2 Background

During the 2009-2010 school year MECC began to implement Response to Intervention (RtI). We used the DIBELS assessment to place students into the Tiers and to monitor their progress. As described in Chapters 2 and 3, students were placed into reading groups based on their DIBELS scores. In 2010, we began to implement differentiated instruction to provide targeted instruction appropriate to the reading levels of the students in the different groups.

While the changes to the reading block introduced in 2010 brought about improvements in ways described in Chapter 3, improving specific instructional practices of individual teachers and para-professionals providing RtI intervention was a much bigger challenge. The 2010 change in how we implemented RtI made it necessary to strengthen differentiated instruction within the classroom. This is because each teacher had the full

range of reading abilities in his/her classroom.

During the 2010 school year it became apparent that teachers and para-professionals were having difficulty implementing Tier 2 instruction. Students in Tier 2 require small group instruction from programs that focuses on specific instructional needs. However, no instructional program had been identified. In addition, the knowledge and training that the para-professionals had received was also inconsistent between each para-professional. This led to a lack of consistency in instruction between classrooms.

Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on our effort to improve Tier 2 instruction by implementing a systematic, evidence-based Tier 2 program in all MECC's classrooms. The next section describes how the Tier 2 instructional practices were developed for the 2011-2012 school year.

4.3 Description of Tier 2 Instruction: The Prescribed Model

According to the National Center on Response to Intervention, "Secondary prevention (Tier 2) typically involves small-group instruction that relies on evidence-based interventions that specify the instructional procedures, duration (typically 10 to 15 weeks of 20 to 40-minute sessions), and frequency (3 or 4 times per week) of instruction" (Essential Components of RtI-A Closer Look at Response to Intervention, 2010 p.10).

"Tier 2" consists of children who fall below the expected levels of accomplishment (called benchmarks) and are at some risk for academic failure but who are still above levels considered to indicate a high risk for failure. Instructional programs are delivered that focus on their specific needs. Instruction is provided in smaller groups than Tier 1 (Shapiro, Edward "Tiered Instruction and Intervention in a Response-to-Intervention Model". RTI

Action Network. 8 pp. 21 January 2014

<<http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tiered-instruction-and-intervention-rti-model>> In addition, interventions at Tier 2 involve instructional programs that are aimed at a level of skill development considered to be further along the continuum of skill acquisition than that seen at Tier 3. In some models of RtI, the same intervention may be used for students at Tiers 2 and 3, but the difference is the amount of time that the student spends within the tiered instruction. Students at Tier 2 typically receive progress monitoring less frequently than those at Tier 3 (Shapiro, p.2).

4.4 Description of Need for a Tier 2 Program

The building reading specialist and I felt that having a prescribed set of instructional procedures for Tier 2 was necessary because there were seven para-professionals who would be assisting with Tier 2 instruction. If there were no specific instructional procedures, then inconsistencies in the interventions would occur. As the building principal, I needed to ensure that regardless of the interventionist, all children would receive targeted instruction with fidelity.

Fidelity with a prescribed model is important as explained by Doug Fuchs, a special education professor at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center:

Fidelity of implementation, I think can best be explained this way. RTI, the people who first promoted RTI, were very much interested – and I think rightly interested – in promoting best evidence practices in schools.

Promoting the idea that teachers and ancillary personnel should be using research backed or research validated instruction. When I say research backed

instruction I mean instruction that was developed through a process, usually directed by researchers, a very carefully conceptualized and operationalized process of instruction to determine its effects on student performance (Fuchs, Doug. National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010 p.1).

In addition, if the intervention is not taught consistently and with accuracy, the data team would be unable to determine if the children were making sufficient progress based on a lack of ability or if it was an outcome of a poor intervention program. Daryl Mellard, a co-principal investigator at the National Center on Response to Intervention believes that one of the most important standards for delivering effective instruction is first having high quality instructional practices and curricula available because if these are used with fidelity, student success will result (Fidelity of Implementation Tools/NCRTI, 2010).

4.5 Identifying a Research-based Tier 2 Instruction Model

During 2010 and 2011, the building reading specialist and I began to research phonemic awareness intervention programs that would be provide scaffold instruction along the phonemic awareness continuum, specific instructional routines, and require minimal time to plan. We identified the 95 Percent Group's "Blueprint for Intervention: Phonological Awareness" as the program that would be implemented with fidelity during the 2011-2012 school year.

We decided on the 95 Percent program for several reasons. First, it had explicit instructions that allowed for consistency of instruction between all kindergarten classrooms. The manuals included italicized print that gave the para-professionals specific terms and directions to use with the children. It also included colored graphics in each lesson which

made it very easy for the para-professionals to follow.

Second, the 95 Percent program consisted of lessons from the phonics continuum. The lessons began at the very beginning of the continuum. This step by step approach in the lessons ensured that no gaps in instruction occurred. For example, prior to using the 95 Percent program, a child may not have been successful in hearing all sounds in words because they were missing a key pre-requisite skill. However, the step by step lessons along the continuum ensured that no gaps in instruction would occur.

Third, the 95 Percent program was cost effective. Unlike some computer intervention programs and other curricular programs, we were able to purchase all materials and instructional manuals for less than five hundred dollars.

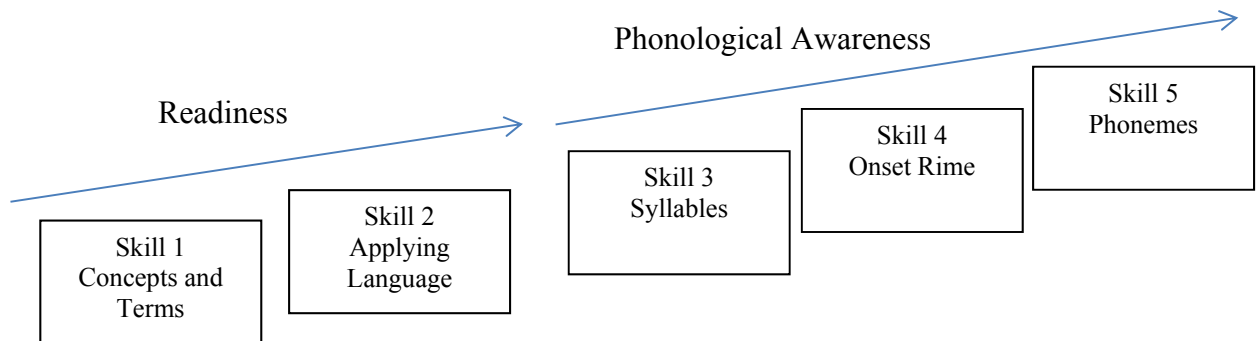
4.6 Description of the 95 Percent Phonological Awareness Program

The 95 Percent Group Phonological Awareness Program is, “A guide that provides teachers with instructional procedures to explicitly teach skills to students who have not attained sufficient levels of phonological awareness through everyday exposure to language or previous instruction” (95 Percent Group, 2009). It is set up in an “I do”, “We do”, and “You do” format so that children have effective modeling of expectations and skills. In addition, it begins with readiness skills before even beginning phonological awareness skills. Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, most of the MECC teachers and para-professionals assumed that the children understood directionality and the concept of first and last. After looking at the gaps in achievement however, it was evident that the children were missing key concepts and terms that were preventing them from mastering phonemic awareness skills.

4.7 The 95 Percent Program Structure

The 95 Percent Program is structured along the phonemic awareness continuum. This continuum begins with readiness skills and ends with phonological awareness skills.

Graphic 4.1: 95 Percent Phonological Awareness Continuum



The two readiness skills are “Concepts and Terms” and “Applying Language”. Examples of these are directionality and one-to one correspondence. There are three phonological awareness skills in the 95 Percent Program. They are “Syllables”, “Onset-Rime”, and “Phonemes”. An example of a final phoneme skill is the ability to add, delete, or substitute sounds in words (95 Percent Group, 2009).

The 95 Percent Program also specifies instructional procedures. For example, each skill lesson includes pictures of the manipulatives that will be used, word lists for the teacher to use as examples during the lesson, and instructional procedures. All of the instructional procedures follow the “I do”, “we do”, “you do” format. This format allows children to watch the teacher demonstrate a skill, practice the skill together with the teacher, and then apply the skill independently. It also leads to consistency of instruction between all classrooms and instructors because they are following common lesson plans and directions.

The 95 Percent Program teacher’s guide also provides a detailed overview of each of

the lessons that explains the reason for each lesson. It provides background information on each skill and why that skill is necessary in order for children to move forward on the phonemic awareness continuum.

No gaps in phonemic awareness instruction occur with the use of the 95 Percent Program. This is because the skills are presented in order of the phonological awareness continuum. Previously, teachers usually started with syllables or onset rime skills before teaching and reviewing concepts and terms or before teaching the children to apply that language. As a result, students continued to struggle in the phoneme segmentation subtest on the DIBELS assessment.

If a teacher or para-professional feels those students in their group are not able to demonstrate mastery of a skill, the instructor has the flexibility to spend more time on that skill. This means that the teachers and para-professionals can take as long as they feel is necessary on a specific skill. Often, the instructor will go back to the previous skill in the 95 Percent Program to strengthen a pre-requisite skill and then revisit the new skill.

4.8 Professional Development to Strengthen Tier 2 Instruction

4.8.1 The 95 Percent Program Professional Development

To ensure that the para-professionals used the 95 Percent Program accurately and with fidelity, all of them were given professional development with the program. The classroom teachers were also included in this professional development. My goal was that the professional development would make the teachers more proficient in the phonemic awareness continuum and more knowledgeable about the skills to address in their small group differentiated instruction as well. The professional development was done in

following four steps by the reading specialist:

- 1) A three hour overview and discussion of the Phonemic Awareness Continuum.
- 2) The reading specialist modeled the first three 95 Percent lessons to a small group of students. These lessons were videotaped and shown to the para-professionals and teachers. The para-professionals and teachers then discussed the video.
- 3) During the first week of implementation, the reading specialist observed each of the para-professionals instructing using the 95 Percent Program. After all of the observations were completed, the para-professionals and reading specialist met together and talked about concerns and questions.
- 4) Each week, the para-professionals and reading specialist meet to discuss pacing, progress, and to answer questions.

4.9 Achievement Outcomes (2010-2011)

The table below compares the student's mid-year subtest DIBELS scores to their end of the year DIBELS subtest scores in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). MECC's end of year goal is for only 5% of students to be intensive in each subtest and just 10% of students to be strategic.

Table 4.1: 2010-2011 Mid-Year and End of Year Kindergarten DIBELS Subtest Score Comparison

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Mid-Year	7%	11%
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency End of Year	6%	7%
Nonsense Word Fluency Mid-Year	10%	28%
Nonsense Word Fluency End of Year	5%	11%

The table shows that the numbers of children remaining intensive or strategic declined between the mid-year and end of year DIBELS assessment. However, out of the 4 end of year categories, only the “Phoneme Segmentation End of Year” category met the strategic goal of 10% or less. Six percent of students scored intensive on the end of year PSF subtest. Eight percent scored intensive on the end of year NWF subtest. Eighteen percent scored strategic on the end of year NWF subtest. However, the end of year results improved in each end of year DIBELS subtest after using the 95 Percent Program.

4.10 Results of the 95 Percent Group Interventions

The 2011-2012 DIBELS subtest data shows that the 95 Percent Group intervention program helped more students move from an intensive or strategic DIBELS cut score to a benchmark score. This is shown in Table 18.

Table 4.2: 2011-2012 Mid-Year and End of Year Kindergarten DIBELS
Subtest Score Comparison

DIBELS Subtest Scoring Category	Percentage of Students Scoring Intensive	Percentage of Students Scoring Strategic
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Mid-Year	9%	15%
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency End of Year	2%	4%
Nonsense Word Fluency Mid-Year	11%	21%
Nonsense Word Fluency End of Year	3%	6%

The table shows that the numbers of children remaining intensive or strategic declined between the mid-year and end of year DIBELS assessment. In addition, each of the end of year categories bested the 5% intensive goal and the 10% strategic goal. Just 2% of students remained intensive in PSF and just 3% remained intensive in NWF. Four percent of students remained strategic in PSF and 6% remained strategic in NWF.

4.11 Comparisons between the 2010-2011 Data and the 2011-2012 Data

More students scored intensive and strategic in PSF during the mid-year 2011-2012 testing compared to the 2010-2011 school year. However, MECC was able to decrease the numbers of students scoring intensive or strategic in PSF at the end of the year by more than half. In addition, MECC was able to decrease the numbers of students scoring intensive or strategic in NWF by almost two thirds. I do believe that the 95 Percent Program played a big part in student achievement. However, it was also the second year that teachers used the fluency, skill, guided reading format for RtI intervention. Teachers also began to incorporate strategies from the professional development sessions into their core instruction. As a result, these instructional improvements combined help more MECC students achieve Benchmark status on the end of year DIBELS assessment.

Chapter 5

EXAMINING 2011 RTI IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

5.1 Introduction

Every year we review student outcomes data. After implementing changes in our RtI program during the two previous years as described in prior chapters, during the summer of 2012 it was once again time to assess outcomes in student literacy.

To do this, we had to disaggregate the DIBELS and STAR data. This enabled us to evaluate individual subgroup performance as well the entire kindergarten cohort's performance. In addition, we needed to examine the impact that the new RtI interventions had to the core reading program as well. As a result, we examined the relationship between end of year reading report card grades and end of year DIBELS and STAR scores. I also had to ensure that every classroom had a heterogeneous group of students. It was important that each classroom was not overloaded with too many students needing Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions so that our new RtI system could work. Consequently, I also used the end of year DIBELS and STAR data to assess the success of the incoming student kindergarten screener assessment. This assessment is given to students prior to the first day of kindergarten. Its purpose is to identify children that will need Tier 2 or Tier 3 RtI reading interventions. This chapter describes our efforts to analyze the success of the RtI changes.

5.2 Examining the Placement Efficacy of the Spring Screening Assessment: Is Each Classroom Getting an Appropriate Heterogeneous Mix of Students?

5.2.1 Rationale for Analysis

When children register for MECC, they do so in spring (most of them). During the registration process, each student is given a reading assessment – we call it a screening assessment. Parents of incoming kindergarteners make appointments for their child to be screened individually by a Morris ECC staff member. The screening takes 15-20 minutes and is done without the parent present.

The screening assessment has two purposes. First, it gives Morris staff the opportunity to see if there are any academic, social, behavioral, or speech concerns that seem very atypical. If one of these areas does seem very atypical, we will have the student come for a second screening with the speech therapist, psychologist, or counselor. The second purpose of the screening assessment is to assign students to their fall classrooms in a way that each kindergarten classroom is heterogeneous academically.

The screening assessment includes the following skills: upper and lower case letter recognition, letter sound recognition, number recognition 0-20, color recognition, shape recognition, rote counting, the ability to write their first name, attention to task, and expressive language (do students speak in single words, phrases, or complete sentences).

Each of these skills is graded by using a “green”, “yellow”, or “red” rating. A green rating means that the child has achieved a satisfactory score in that subtest. A yellow rating means that a child has achieved a score that is close to a satisfactory score. A red rating means that a child has achieved a score well below a satisfactory level.² After each subtest is

² The rating cut scores were based on the first trimester report card cut scores for each skill.

scored, children are then given an overall rating of “green,” “yellow,” or “red.”³ These are used to guide the placement process by which students are assigned to their fall homeroom classrooms as well as provide diagnostic information for each child to be used by their teachers later on.

The screener results and color codes are used to assign children to their fall homeroom classrooms as well as provide diagnostic information for each child to be used by their teachers later on. Each Morris kindergarten classroom has 20-22 students. I try to make each classroom begin the year with at least 10 “green” students, 6 “yellow students,” and 6 “red” students. This process ensures a heterogeneous classroom. It also ensures that there are not too many children who are entering kindergarten with low academic skills in one classroom.

The ideal heterogeneous classroom with 22 students would have no more than 8 students scoring Intensive on the DIBELS assessment, 6-8 students scoring Strategic on the DIBELS assessment, and 8 or more students scoring Benchmark on the DIBELS assessment. These classroom composition numbers are considered ideal because they allow the teachers and para-professionals to work with children in reading groups of no more than 8 students. Since we have recently begun the screening and placement approach described above, it is important to examine the effectiveness of Morris’ incoming kindergarten screener (done in spring) to determine if accurately identifies children for ability-level reading groups as measured by fall DIBELS assessment results.

³ As the principal, I only use the upper and lower case letter identification, letter sound identification, and number identification to get this overall rating. The other subtests are used to give teachers more information about the child’s kindergarten readiness skills.

5.2.2 Results of Analysis

The table below shows each classroom's composition of students at the three DIBELS levels based on the students' September DIBELS assessment scores. Students are initially assigned to classrooms in spring and summer based on an initial screening assessment as described above. The classroom composition that is the goal is a maximum of 8 students scoring Intensive on DIBELS, 6-8 students at Strategic, and 8 or more at Benchmark.

Table 5.1: Number and Percent of Students (in Fall) at 3 Levels of DIBELS by Classroom

Classroom #	Number of Students in Classroom	Number and Percent of Students at Benchmark		Number and Percent of Students at Strategic		Number and Percent of Students at Intensive	
1	22	13	59%	3	14%	6	27%
2	22	12	55%	3	14%	7	32%
3	20	10	50%	5	25%	5	25%
4	20	9	45%	7	35%	4	20%
5	21	12	57%	2	10%	7	33%
6	22	11	50%	3	14%	8	36%
7	21	9	43%	8	38%	4	19%
8	22	13	59%	1	5%	8	36%
9	22	9	41%	4	18%	9	41%
10	23	14	61%	5	22%	4	17%
11	22	9	41%	6	27%	7	32%
12	22	12	54%	5	23%	5	23%
13	21	12	57%	3	14%	6	29%
14	23	11	48%	2	9%	10	43%
15	22	8	36%	7	32%	7	32%

Classrooms ideally should have 8 or fewer Intensive students. The table shows that two of the fifteen classrooms had more than 8 Intensive students – classrooms 9 and 14.

Classrooms ideally should have 6 - 8 Strategic students and 8 or more at Benchmark.

In each classroom, at least 9 students scored at Benchmark. This met the goal of 8 or more Benchmark students per classroom, although nine of the classrooms had 11 or more

Benchmark students and relatively low numbers of Strategic students.

In seven of the fifteen classrooms, there were 3 or less Strategic students. In these classrooms there were generally excessively large numbers of Benchmark students and two of these classrooms included the higher numbers of Intensive students. These classroom, then, were not well balanced in terms of the heterogeneity goal we have set.

The classrooms that departed excessively from the ideal heterogeneous composition indicate some reliability concerns with the spring screening assessment. My analysis of the scoring systems for both these assessment tools indicates that one factor is differences in weight between the two assessments placed on “letter naming.” If children can name 9 or more letters, they are considered “yellow” on the screening assessment. However, on the DIBELS letter naming fluency assessment, there is a mix of upper and lowercase letters from the whole alphabet. If the letters that the children can identify are not found in abundance in that DIBELS assessment, then the children will not be able to identify as many letters in a minute. This will result in a lower DIBELS score.

5.2.3 Implications for Program Management or Instruction at MECC

The results show that overall; the incoming kindergarten assessment is a generally accurate measure for creating heterogeneous classrooms, but there is some degree of “misplacement” in relation to our heterogeneity goal.

The screening assessment is more accurate for identifying Intensive students; less accurate for Strategic students. To achieve a more consistent heterogeneity composition across classrooms, about half the classrooms should have more Strategic students and several fewer students at either Benchmark or Intensive.

This indicates one possible change needed for the spring reading assessment: the cut score to achieve a “yellow” rating on the kindergarten screener must be raised from 9-13 upper and lower case letters. Teachers feel that 13 is a more ideal cut score because means that the children could identify half of the letters. If they are able to name half the letters then even with the variation in letters that are shown, the children should be able to name enough of them in the letter naming fluency DIBELS assessment to get a Strategic score.

The seven classes that had 12 or more students achieve benchmark and the four classes that had only nine students achieve benchmark also highlighted the need to increase the cut scores on the “green” ratings on the kindergarten screener. The current “green” cut scores seem to identify students who we assume will attain benchmark on the DIBELS assessment but who only reach Strategic. If they are able to name 20 of the letters then even with the variation in letters that are shown, the children should be able to name enough of them in the letter naming fluency DIBELS assessment to get a benchmark score. As a result, we will raise the “green” rating to from correctly identifying 18 upper and lower case letters to 20 upper and lower case letters. Raising the cut scores on the kindergarten screener should make the identification of the benchmark students more reliable.

5.3 Examining the Relationship between DIBELS and Kindergarten End of Year Report Card Grade: How Closely Do They Relate?

5.3.1 Rationale for Analysis

Milford School District divides the academic calendar into three trimesters. Report cards are sent home at the end of each trimester. The end of trimester grading occurs in November, March, and June. On the report cards, kindergarten students receive a reading

skills grade of “S” for satisfactory, “N” for needs improvement, and “U” for unsatisfactory. Kindergarten students also receive a reading comprehension grade of “S” for satisfactory, “N” for needs improvement, and “U” for unsatisfactory. This analysis explores the correlation between final report card grades and spring DIBELS results for students. If the correlation is not high, then we may need to review and possibly revise our grading criteria.

The reading skills grade is determined by students mastering a prescribed set of objectives. Trimester grades for reading skills and reading comprehension are not cumulative. This means that a child can receive an unsatisfactory grade in Trimesters 1 and 2, but receive a satisfactory grade in Trimester 3 and meet promotion.

The reading skill objectives that are reported in the kindergarten report card are phoneme segmentation, rhyming, letter-sound association, high frequency word recognition in isolation and in context, initial sound recognition, and short vowel sound recognition. The DIBELS end of year benchmark assessment includes three subtests. These subtests are letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency. Each of the report card reading skills that are assessed are included in these DIBELS subtests except for rhyming and high frequency word recognition. However, although DIBELS does not have a specific rhyming assessment, rhyming is a phonological awareness skill that is targeted during our small group differentiated instruction with the use of the 95% intervention program.

The reading comprehension grade is also determined by students mastering a set number of objectives. The reading comprehension objectives that are reported on the kindergarten report card are derived from listening comprehension questions and passage comprehension questions. These assessments were all created by the MacMillan-McGraw

Hill reading program. Before answering the listening comprehension questions, the teacher reads aloud a passage. The student then answers the question based on their memory and comprehension of the passage. The passage comprehension questions range in length from three to six sentences. The students read the passage independently and then answer questions about these sentences. The sentences include the sight words and words that the children should be able to decode. As a result, students must be proficient in decoding and recoding words which is a phonics skill.

At the end of the school year, first grade teachers are sent each child's end of year report card grades and RtI Tier level. The Tier level is decided by the students' performance on the end of year DIBELS assessment. Morris kindergarten teachers are concerned that students who are not proficient in phonemic awareness and phonics skills (according to DIBELS end of year benchmark scores) are receiving satisfactory scores on the end of year Trimester 3 report card in the reading skills and reading comprehension areas. Consequently, we want to examine the relationships between the DIBELS spring assessment scores by comparing the end of year RtI Tier levels and the Trimester 3 reading skills report card grades to see if there is a correlation.

5.3.2 Results of Analysis

Table 5.22 shows the students end of year grades (MP3) in the "Skills" dimension broken down by their DIBELS Spring tier level classification. It shows that 294 of the students (93%) ended up the year at the DIBELS "Tier 1" level. (This is shown in bottom row of each table, leftmost cell). The three rows above the bottom row show the DIBELS Tier levels for the students at *each* of the three possible end-of-year MP grade levels (S, N, or

U). Overall, the table shows that the large majority of students end the year graded “Satisfactory” by their teacher in reading skills: 292 out of 316 (92%) get an “S” on reading skills.

Table 5.2: MP3 Grades (Skills) By DIBELS Spring Tier Cross Tabulation

			DIBL-Spring TIER			Total
			1	2	3	
MP3 Skills	S	Count	279	12	1	292
		% of “S” students at each TIER in Spring	95.5%	4.1%	0.3%	100.0%
	N	Count	13	5	2	20
		% of “N” students at each TIER in Spring	65.0%	25.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	U	Count	2	2	0	4
		% of “U” students at each TIER in Spring	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	294	19	3	316
		% of students at each TIER in Spring	93.0%	6.0%	0.9%	100.0%

The grey cells show students with anomalous classifications (either a U grade while getting a “Tier 1” DIBELS score or an S grade while getting a “Tier 3” DIBELS score.) Although there are these anomalies, only three students comprise these anomalies. This is not a significant number of students.

There are 13 students who are in Tier 1 and have a needs improvement on the report card. The teachers identified these students. Out of those 13 students, 11 missed achieving a benchmark DIBELS score by five points or less. The two students who received an unsatisfactory on their report card and achieved a benchmark DIBELS score were also identified. Both of these students were stronger in the letter naming and phoneme segmentation DIBELS subtests. Their nonsense word fluency scores were the lowest. This demonstrates that although the students could identify letter names fluently and were stronger in phonemic awareness skills, they still struggled with decoding and recoding words. This

difficulty correlates to an unsatisfactory on the report card in reading skills because they were unable to meet the short vowel sound objective successfully.

Table 5.3 is the students' end of year grades MP3 in the "Comprehension" dimension broken down by their DIBELS Spring tier level classification. It shows that 294 of the students (93%) ended up the year at the DIBELS "Tier 1" level. (This is shown in bottom row of each table, leftmost cell). The three rows above the bottom row show the DIBELS Tier levels for the students at *each* of the three possible end-of-year MP grade levels (S, N, or U). Overall, the table shows that the large majority of students end the year graded "Satisfactory" by their teacher in reading comprehension: 286 out of 316 (90%) get an "S" in reading comprehension; 85% of those students received a satisfactory grade and were in Tier 1.

Twenty students received a needs improvement on the report card and were in Tier 1. Once again, teachers identified these students and 17 out of 20 of them were within one or two objectives from achieving a satisfactory report card grade. The four students who received an unsatisfactory report card grade and were in Tier 1 also were stronger in the letter naming and phoneme segmentation DIBELS subtests. Their nonsense word fluency scores were the lowest. As a result these students would have more difficulty using phonics skills to decode and recode words as they read the passages and had to comprehend the text. Their lack of reading fluency would negatively impact reading comprehension.

Table 5.3: MP 3 Grades (Comprehension) By DIBELS Spring Tier Cross Tabulation

			DIBL-Spring TIER			Total
			1	2	3	
MP 3 Comprehension	S	Count	270	15	1	286
		% of “S” students at each TIER in Spring	94.4%	5.2%	0.3%	100.0%
	N	Count	20	2	2	24
		% of “N” students at each TIER in Spring	83.3%	8.3%	8.3%	100.0%
	U	Count	4	2	0	6
		% of “U” students at each TIER in Spring	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	294	19	3	316
		% of students at each TIER in Spring	93.0%	6.0%	0.9%	100.0%

5.3.3 Implications for Program Management or Instruction at MECC

There is a high correlation between the number of students achieving a benchmark score on the DIBELS assessment and receiving a satisfactory grade in reading skills and reading comprehension. As a result, overall the DIBELS assessment results correlate highly with end of year report card grades. By and large, report card grades by teachers are supported by the DIBELS measures of phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Students also have to use these phonics skills to decode and recode words in the passages in order to comprehend the passage. Consequently, Morris will not change either the reading skills that are on the report card or change using the end of year DIBELS benchmark assessment at the end of year.

However, this analysis suggests some revision in the format of the report card. After reviewing the correlation analysis and the report card format, we will now specifically list the reading skill objectives that determine the report card grade on the report card. The teachers felt that parents needed more information on specific areas of strength and specific areas of weakness. In the old format, the reading skills that generated the grade were not listed. As a result, parents did not know what skill objectives were strengths and what skill objectives

were weaknesses. In addition, both “listening comprehension” and “passage comprehension” were also added under the reading comprehension grade so that parents would know areas of strength and need.

5.4 Examining DIBELS 2012-2013 Fall to Spring Gains: Overall for Students and By Demographic Subgroups

5.4.1 Rationale for Analysis

The state of Delaware's education accountability policies requires disaggregating achievement results among demographic subgroups. These subgroups include groups identified by gender, race, and language. The racial groups at Morris are White, Hispanic, and African American. The ELL subgroup consists of Hispanic and African American who speak Spanish or Creole as their native language and are at various stages of learning English.

We want all students to achieve benchmark status on the Spring DIBELS assessment. Many students, however, come to school far behind in lower literacy development in English language, and this is particularly of the Hispanic and ELL subgroups. Our African American students are far more likely to come from low-income and single parent homes, which as much literature shows, creates a whole set of literacy development challenges.

The challenge for MECC is to accelerate low-literacy students as much as possible in the one year we have them. These subgroups with lower fall assessment scores must show much more growth to achieve benchmark status on the spring assessment. These groups require more intensive interventions as well as more targeted instructional time.

This analysis looks at fall to spring gains (2012-2013) for all students and by subgroups. The intent here is to determine how much progress is made for all students, to learn if subgroups are progressing adequately, and to have evidence on the degree to which our intensive interventions are effective. This information can help us evaluate current reading interventions and the time allocated for these interventions.

5.4.2 Results of Analysis

Overall: All Students. Table 5.4 reports performance levels in DIBELS for cohorts of students. Each student is tested in the fall and spring. The table shows how many students score at the intensive, strategic, and benchmark level in the fall and the spring (BM = benchmark; Strat – strategic; Int – Intensive). For example, in the first row of Table 24, out of the 159 students (BM row total) who scored benchmark in the fall, 151 of those students (95%) scored benchmark in the spring. Fifty-nine out of the 62 students at strategic in the fall scored benchmark in the spring (95%); and of the 93 students who began in fall at the intensive level, 8 (9%) rose to strategic and 83 (89%) scored benchmark by the spring.

Table 5.4: DIBELS-Fall Level by DIBELS-Spring Level Cross Tabulation

		DIBEL-Spr Level			Total
		BM	Strat	Int	
DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	151	8	0	159
		95.0%	5.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Strat	59	3	0	62
		95.2%	4.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	Int	83	8	2	93
		89.2%	8.6%	2.2%	100.0%
Total		293	19	2	314
		93.3%	6.1%	0.6%	100.0%

Table 5.4 also shows that students who came to kindergarten with pre-requisite letter recognition and first sound fluency skills were better able to meet spring DIBELS benchmark expectations. This is evident because 95% of the students who scored benchmark in the fall also achieved benchmark in the spring. Of the 93 students who came to kindergarten with lower letter recognition and first sound fluency skills (Intensive level in Fall), 89% achieved benchmark status in the spring.

5.4.3 Gender Comparisons

Table 5.5 reports performance levels in DIBELS for male and female students. Each student is tested in the fall and spring. The table shows how many students score at the intensive, strategic, and benchmark level in the fall and the spring. For example, in the first row of Table 5.5, out of the 91 female students (BM row total) who scored benchmark in the fall, 87 of those students (95.6%) scored benchmark in the spring. Twenty-five out of the 25 students at strategic in the fall scored benchmark in the spring (100%); and of the 48 students who began in fall at the intensive level, 1 (2.1%) remained intensive, 4 (8.3%) rose to strategic and 43 (89.6%) scored benchmark by the spring. The percentages of girls and boys moving from intensive to strategic, strategic to benchmark, and remaining benchmark are very similar. Although 91 females compared to 68 males achieved benchmark in the fall, the end of year data shows that both groups made sufficient progress. This is evident because over 94% of male and female students achieved benchmark in the spring. In addition, just 2.1% of females and 2.2% of the male students remained intensive. As a result, there is no significant difference in progress made between male and female students.

Table 5.5: DIBELS-Fall Level by DIBELS-Spring Level Cross Tabulation (by Gender)

Gender			DIBEL-Spr Level			Total
			BM	Strat	Int	
F	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	87 95.6%	4 4.4%	0 0.0%	91 100.0%
		Strat	25 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	25 100.0%
		Int	43 89.6%	4 8.3%	1 2.1%	48 100.0%
	Total		155 94.5%	8 4.9%	1 0.6%	164 100.0%
	M	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	64 94.1%	4 5.9%	0 0.0%
Strat			34 91.9%	3 8.1%	0 0.0%	37 100.0%
Int			40 88.9%	4 8.9%	1 2.2%	45 100.0%
Total			138 92.0%	11 7.3%	1 0.7%	150 100.0%
Total		DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	151 95.0%	8 5.0%	0 0.0%
	Strat		59 95.2%	3 4.8%	0 0.0%	62 100.0%
	Int		83 89.2%	8 8.6%	2 2.2%	93 100.0%
	Total		293 93.3%	19 6.1%	2 0.6%	314 100.0%

5.4.4 English Language Learner (ELL) Students

Table 5.6 reports performance levels in DIBELS for ELL and non-ELL students.

Each student is tested in the fall and spring. The table shows how many students score at the intensive, strategic, and benchmark level in the fall and the spring. For example, in the first row of Table 5.6, out of the 18 ELL students (BM row total) who scored benchmark in the fall, 17 of those students (94.4%) scored benchmark in the spring. Eighteen out of the 18 students at strategic in the fall scored benchmark in the spring (100%); and of the 26 students

who began in fall at the intensive level, 0 remained intensive, 1 (3.8%) rose to strategic and 25 (96.2%) scored benchmark by the spring. There is no achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students. In fact, the ELL students scored better than the ELL students. Ninety-six point two percent of ELL students achieved benchmark status in the spring while 92.5% of non-ELL students achieved benchmark status in the spring.

Table 5.6: DIBELS-Fall Level by DIBELS-Spring Level Cross Tabulation (by ELL)

ELL			DIBEL-Spr Level			Total
			BM	Strat	Int	
ELL	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	17	1		18
			94.4%	5.6%		100.0%
		Strat	18	0		18
	Int		100.0%	0.0%		100.0%
			25	1		26
	Total		96.2%	3.8%		100.0%
			60	2		62
		96.8%	3.2%		100.0%	
NonELL	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	134	7	0	141
			95.0%	5.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Strat	41	3	0	44
	Int		93.2%	6.8%	0.0%	100.0%
			58	7	2	67
	Total		86.6%	10.4%	3.0%	100.0%
			233	17	2	252
		92.5%	6.7%	0.8%	100.0%	
Total	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	151	8	0	159
			95.0%	5.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Strat	59	3	0	62
	Int		95.2%	4.8%	0.0%	100.0%
			83	8	2	93
	Total		89.2%	8.6%	2.2%	100.0%
			293	19	2	314
		93.3%	6.1%	0.6%	100.0%	

5.4.5 Disaggregation by Ethnic Group

Table 5.7 reports performance levels in DIBELS for ELL by ethnic group. Each student is tested in the fall and spring. The table shows how many students score at the intensive, strategic, and benchmark level in the fall and the spring. For example, in the first row of Table 5.7, out of the 40 African American students (Benchmark row total) who scored benchmark in the fall, 40 of those students (100%) scored benchmark in the spring. All 18 of the students at strategic in the fall scored benchmark in the spring (100%); and of the 33 who began in fall at the intensive level, 0 remained intensive, 4 (12.1%) rose to strategic and 29 (87.9%) scored benchmark by the spring. Students in each of the ethnic groups moved from the intensive and strategic levels to the benchmark level. African American and Hispanic students had the highest number of students moving from the intensive level because none remained intensive. In addition, the African American and Hispanic students scored better than the White students in the spring. Ninety-five point six percent of the African American students, 96.5% of the Hispanic students, and 90.7% of the White students achieved benchmark status on the spring DIBELS assessment.

Table 5.7: DIBELS-Fall Level by DIBELS-Spring Level Cross Tabulation (by Race)

Ethnic			DIBEL-Spr Level			Total
			BM	Strat	Int	
AfrAm	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	40	0		40
			100.0%	0.0%		100.0%
		Strat	18	0		18
	Int		100.0%	0.0%		100.0%
			29	4		33
			87.9%	12.1%		100.0%
	Total		87	4		91
Hispanic	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	15	1		16
			93.8%	6.2%		100.0%
		Strat	17	0		17
	Int		100.0%	0.0%		100.0%
			23	1		24
			95.8%	4.2%		100.0%
	Total		55	2		57
White	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	93	7	0	100
			93.0%	7.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Strat	23	3	0	26
	Int		88.5%	11.5%	0.0%	100.0%
			31	3	2	36
			86.1%	8.3%	5.6%	100.0%
	Total		147	13	2	162
Total	DIBEL-Fall Level	BM	148	8	0	156
			94.9%	5.1%	0.0%	100.0%
		Strat	58	3	0	61
	Int		95.1%	4.9%	0.0%	100.0%
			83	8	2	93
			89.2%	8.6%	2.2%	100.0%
	Total		289	19	2	310
			93.2%	6.1%	0.6%	100.0%

5.4.6 Implications for Program Management or Instruction at MECC

The results of the “fall to spring gains” cross tabulations provide evidence supporting the effectiveness of our current instructional practices. While demographically-based achievement gaps exist in fall on DIBELS, they largely disappear by the time of the spring administration of the DIBELS test. Thus we have information affirming the success of our small group differentiated instruction as measured by DIBELS. We will need to continue to monitor the fall to spring gains in the aggregate and disaggregated by the demographic groups so that we can results to determine if growth on DIBELS and achievement gap reduction is meeting our goals.

5.5. Fall and Spring STAR Scores and Gain by Demographic and ELL Status

5.5.1 Rationale for Analysis

The STAR assessment is a multiple choice and computer administered assessment for literacy skills. It assesses seven areas of literacy and has a potential score range of 300-900. These seven areas are General Readiness (GR), Graphophonemic Knowledge (GK), Phonemic Awareness (PA), Comprehension (CO), Phonics (PH), Vocabulary (VO), and Structural Analysis (SA). This range of assessed skills is much broader than the skills assessed in the DIBELS assessment because DIBELS does not assess General Readiness, Comprehension, Vocabulary, or Structural Analysis.

Many of our ELL and minority students come to kindergarten with a deficit in oral language skills and vocabulary skills because of limited lack of exposure to text and spoken

language in the home.⁴ Consequently, this could make the student's progress in the STAR assessment lower than the DIBELS assessment. More of our White students are from professional and working class families. The majority of our minority students are from families with lower income, low education backgrounds.

As a result, I wanted to examine the initial entry scores on the STAR assessment and gains made by each demographic group over the school year. Because the STAR assessment measures a broader range of skills than the DIBELS assessment, it is important to have a measure of outcomes related to targeted interventions with different student populations.

5.5.2 Results of Analysis

The results show that the gains made from the Fall STAR assessment to the Spring STAR assessment range from 226 to 248. The average growth of all students is 239 points, with whites making the largest gains. African Americans made the smallest gains, although the differences in gains between both groups are not large. The difference in gains between ELL and non-ELL students is also small (about 15% of a standard deviation). The difference in gains between black and white students is slightly larger at 25% of a standard deviation.

The large gaps at entry between ELL and non-ELL students and between minority and White students reflect students coming to school with very different early learning experiences related to language and literacy development. Unfortunately, over the course of the school year, the learning gaps do not change. These students are getting instruction in all of the STAR areas but are coming to school with deficits that are difficult to make up in one

⁴ Much literature shows strong relationships between home background variables and academic success in school. Students growing up in poverty, in single parent households, and in households where there is little or no exposure to written text, guided reading, and complex spoken language start school with large language deficits that tend to increase each year (Chapman, Hancock, Kaiser, & Stanton-Chapman (2004); Hart & Risley (1995); Kieffer (2008); and Lee (2011). Chapter 6 discusses this in more depth.

year.

The end of year STAR results also show different outcomes compared to the end of year DIBELS results. STAR data shows larger achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL students and minority and White students compared to end of year DIBELS data. (A subsequent section in this chapter discusses this further and examines correlations between STAR and DIBELS.)

5.5.3 Implications for Program Management or Instruction at MECC

The differences between the end of year DIBELS and STAR results are significant. As a result, one question that is raised by the data is why the achievement gap in the gains between groups is larger for STAR than for DIBELS. One possible explanation may be that Comprehension, Structural Analysis, and General Readiness are a larger part of the STAR assessment and are not included on the DIBELS assessment.

These achievement differences meant that teachers and I had to look at students differently to assess their progress. Because the achievement gaps were not as significant when looking at just the DIBELS assessments, we needed to look at how the subtests differed. For example, the additional STAR subtests assessed skills that DIBELS did not. Two of those skills were vocabulary and comprehension. In addition, we also had to look at the entire reading instructional block to see where these comprehension and vocabulary skills could be embedded in the instruction. The results of this data illustrate the need for targeted vocabulary and comprehension instruction for students from families with low socio-economic status. Although I cannot definitively state that the lower gains from the minority and ELL students are a result of deficits in these areas, the data seems to suggest this. In

addition we also had to look at the differences in how the assessments were given. The DIBELS assessment was given 1:1 with a para-professional and the student. If a child misunderstood a direction or needed any type of prompting to pay attention, an adult was present to provide guidance. However, the STAR assessment is done on a computer. Children listen to a computerized voice and directions rather than hearing it from an adult sitting with them. When students take the STAR test, an adult oversees the testing but it is not possible to be immediately aware if a child is misunderstanding questions, making mistakes, or not paying attention. Consequently, this illustrates the need for us to be sure students are aware of how to take the test and engage appropriately with a computer.

Table 5.8: Fall and Spring STAR Scores and Gain by Demographic Status

Ethnic		Fall STAR	Spring STAR	STAR Gain
AfrAm	Mean	421.38	648.97	226.91
	N	94	94	91
	Std. Deviation	62.303	81.515	81.818
Hisp	Mean	405.58	634.95	232.24
	N	60	58	58
	Std. Deviation	79.151	86.449	96.066
White	Mean	457.14	704.52	248.69
	N	165	165	163
	Std. Deviation	75.566	81.336	81.292
Total	Mean	436.91	675.32	239.28
	N	319	317	312
	Std. Deviation	75.572	87.680	84.684

Table 5.9: Fall and Spring STAR Scores and Gain by ELL Status

ELL		Fall STAR	Spring STAR	STAR Gain
ELL	Mean	404.31	630.46	228.10
	N	64	63	63
	Std. Deviation	77.445	85.972	96.720
Non-ELL	Mean	445.09	686.44	242.11
	N	255	254	249
	Std. Deviation	72.991	84.650	81.330
Total	Mean	436.91	675.32	239.28
	N	319	317	312
	Std. Deviation	75.572	87.680	84.684

5.6 Examining Correlations between DIBELS and STAR Early Literature Assessment: How Closely Do They Relate?

5.6.1 Rationale for Analysis

Milford School District has two purposes for the use of the DIBELS assessment and the STAR Early Literature assessment. The first purpose is to use these assessments as universal screening tools to determine literacy areas that may need to be assessed diagnostically. The second purpose is to determine if students have made sufficient growth in literacy skills as part of the Response to Intervention program. Milford uses both assessments so that teachers will be able to make these determinations with two different measures and forms of data.

MECC teachers believe that the DIBELS assessment is more accurate than the STAR Early Literacy assessment because the DIBELS assessment is given 1:1, whereas STAR Early Literature assessment is a multiple choice test done on a computer. This 1:1 format for DIBELS means that student responses are recorded with maximum accuracy; also the 1:1 administration helps the teacher see where errors are being made by students and this is useful diagnostically. For example, in the nonsense word fluency test, the assessor marks the errors that that child makes. This allows the assessor to see if it is the beginning or ending consonant sounds that are being missed or the middle vowel sound. Errors are analyzed to help determine phonics skills to target.

The STAR Early Literature assessment is taken on a computer. It is in a multiple choice format, enhanced by graphics and verbal interaction with the test-taker. The test does not require reading nor does it measure reading fluency. Its format assesses vocabulary and understanding of reading passages. While an adult may directly observe the testing process,

there is no recording of the child's interaction with the test.

Since both tests are used and provide assessment scores on students, we have wanted to examine more closely the empirical relationship between these two assessments. If they have a very high correlation, then possibly they are redundant; on the other hand, if there is little or no correlation between the two measures, then we need to know this, investigate more the reasons, and make sure that one of the tests is not deficient.

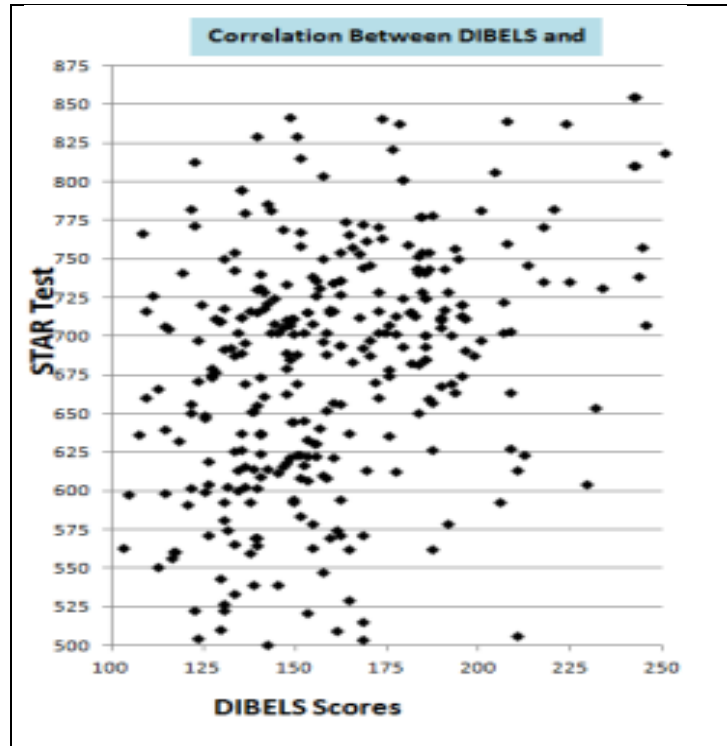
5.6.2 Results of Analysis

Figure 1 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the DIBELS assessment and the STAR assessment is .41 – a moderate correlation. This correlation shows that on average students with higher DIBELS scores tend to have higher STAR scores, but it is far from a strong correlation. At any given DIBELS level, there is a wide range of variation in STAR scores, and vice versa. This is most true for those students who score in the range around the middle of scores on either measure. For instance, at the 160 level on DIBELS, it can be seen that majority of STAR scores lie in the middle of the STAR range (620 – 720), but, at the same time, quite a number of the 160 level DIBELS students have high STAR scores (above 7500) and quite a number have low STAR scores (below 570).

For example, consider a student who scored at 770 in STAR and a 110 DIBELS score. According to the STAR assessment, a score of 770 is just 5 points away from a child being considered a probable reader and 95 points above the STAR's "Benchmark" level. However, a DIBELS score of 110 is considered in the strategic range and is 9 points away from DIBEL's "Benchmark" level. Conversely, a student scoring at 505 on STAR and 210 on DIBELS is below the STAR benchmark by 170 points, but above the DIBELS benchmark

by 91.

Figure 5.1: Correlation between DIBELS and STAR



There are several reasons that likely explain why there is only a moderate correlation between the two assessments. First, the STAR assessment is a longer assessment. It assesses 41 skills in seven literacy domains. At the kindergarten level, these domains are, “General readiness, graphophonemic knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, structural analysis, comprehension and vocabulary” (Getting the Most Out of STAR Early Literacy, 2010). However, at the kindergarten level, the DIBELS assessment measures just two domains which are phonemic awareness and phonics. As a result, the teachers use the DIBELS assessment to give further diagnostic assessments in order to target the specific skills that are weak.

Students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 receive 40-60 minutes of targeted skill instruction four

days a week based on their targeted skill needs. Conversely, because the STAR assessment is so broad, it is not possible for teachers to target all of the skills that the results of the STAR assessment could say are weak. The time that it would take to use diagnostic assessments in each of the seven domains is not feasible in the time that teachers have to teach and to assess and monitor progress.

A second reason that there is only a moderate correlation between the two assessments likely has to do with the different amount of time each assessment requires: STAR is just 10-15 minutes on the computer – a long time for many kindergartners – while DIBELS is one minute for each portion of the assessment and the entire time is interaction with an adult. The shorter DIBELS assessments make it much easier for children to maintain their attention to the task. The STAR assessment requires a longer span of focus and attention and this is difficult for many students, particularly students from home environments where often very little time is spent under the supervision and mentoring of a parent who daily spends time in lengthy reading sessions with the child and engaged in lengthy conversations. Children who do not have this in their daily experience have a much more difficult time sustaining attention during a formal literacy assessment process.

A quarter of MECC's students are Hispanic or French Creole. For these students, the vocabulary and comprehension portion of the STAR assessment is considerably more difficult than for a student with English as their native language. And even for those for whom English is their native language, many grow up in relatively impoverished environments which are not good for strong literacy development.

As has been found in other research correlating DIBELS with other reading measures (Roehrig, 2007), that there is not a high correlation shows that each instrument measures

different aspects of reading. The two assessments are not redundant because they are different in their methods and what they focus on; they each provide different information. Research on these assessments indicates that both are adequately valid and reliable measures for what they are designed for: DIBELS efficiently assesses reading fluency and STAR provides assessment data on students' vocabulary level and reading comprehension abilities.

To further analyze the DIBELS and STAR correlation, I examined the correlation within our three main demographic populations: White, African American, and Hispanic. The correlation was lower among African American students – .29 – and slightly higher for Hispanic students at .34. For White students the correlation is .45. A likely reason for the lower correlation among the Hispanic and African American students is that more come from low-income backgrounds: 68% of our Hispanic students and 75% of our African American students or on free/reduced lunch. Literature in Chapter 6 shows children from low income families have much smaller vocabularies and less of the kind of background knowledge essential to reading comprehension. This could lead to doing better on DIBELS because no comprehension or vocabulary measures are included, but not so well on STAR where the comprehension and vocabulary portions are more demanding.

5.6.3 Implications for Program Management or Instruction at MECC

Both DIBELS and the STAR assessments provide information, but different information. We need to use these assessments with an understanding of what they assess and their individual strengths and weaknesses. STAR provides limited assessment information on phonemic awareness and reading fluency; DIBELS is weaker on vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

MECC will continue to use the DIBELS assessment as the RtI screener. Based on the screener results, diagnostic assessments will continue to be used to target areas for specific phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. DIBELS will also be the tool that is used for progress monitoring as well as the tool used to determine Tier levels for students.

Reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction will continue to take place during the core reading program instruction. To monitor students' progress in vocabulary development and reading comprehension, teachers will use our curriculum-based core reading assessments for ongoing formative assessment and we will use the STAR early literacy assessment as our once a year standardized measure. Results on both data sources will be used to identify areas of need and for conferences with parents.

This analysis shows value from both assessments. The STAR assessment helps monitor vocabulary and comprehension development and targets areas of need for individual students and subgroups. In particular it highlights the need for attention to vocabulary development and reading comprehension for African American and Hispanic students. The DIBELS assessment indicates less of an achievement gap among the demographic groups in terms of reading fluency.

5.6.4 Reflections and Recommendations Concerning Data

Having done many different kinds of analyses as part of my efforts to review RtI progress as described in this and prior chapters, this concluding section will offer some reflections and look forward. I describe here four types of annual or biannual reviews we can do to continue to monitor our progress and support our continuous improvement planning. Each description below starts with the main question it addresses. I conclude by identifying some areas where we might benefit with more and better data and more capacity to analyze the data we have.

1) What percentage of students (by ELL/non-ELL, and low SES/high SES) advance up a Tier from Fall to Spring?

Identifying the percentage of students (by ELL/non-ELL and low SES/high SES) who advance up a Tier from Fall to Spring would be valuable data for several reasons. First, students from each category may begin the year with the same initial fall DIBELS and STAR results. Their initial fall scores may be due to the amount of background knowledge that the students have with phonemic awareness, phonics skills, and exposure to literature. However, students with strong native language literacy skills may require different instructional supports than students with weak native language literacy skills. In addition, students with lower language proficiency in English are likely to need substantial language support in addition to strong reading instruction to achieve reading comprehension and reading skill gains at expected levels. Patterns of student success can be determined. For example, do certain teachers have more success in moving students up a Tier than other teachers? Are Hispanic students more successful in advancing a Tier than Haitian students? These patterns can be used to help teachers identify instructional strategies that are working to help students

progress in language development. If a certain group is less successful, then we need to know this and must explore a change in intervention strategy.

2) What language proficiency measure could be used at the beginning of the year to gauge student proficiency in their native language?

Collecting language proficiency data, in addition to using the DIBELS and STAR data, will help to determine the extent and kind of reading and language support students will need to meet important reading goals. English language learner students, even if they have strong native language skills, may still require targeted interventions if their English language fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension is weak. In addition, English language learner students who are not proficient in their native language will need much more targeted interventions than their peers who are fluent in their native language.

3) How can we use the STAR assessment data in December to get data earlier in the year on instructional needs in reading comprehension and vocabulary?

Administering the STAR assessment in December could provide additional data for teachers to use to target student needs in comprehension and vocabulary development. Administering the STAR assessment at the end of the year is only useful to measure student growth against the DIBELS assessment. It is not helpful in driving reading instruction because the students have completed their kindergarten year. Instruction to address needs identified by the December STARS administration could be embedded in the core reading program as well as during reading Response to Intervention time.

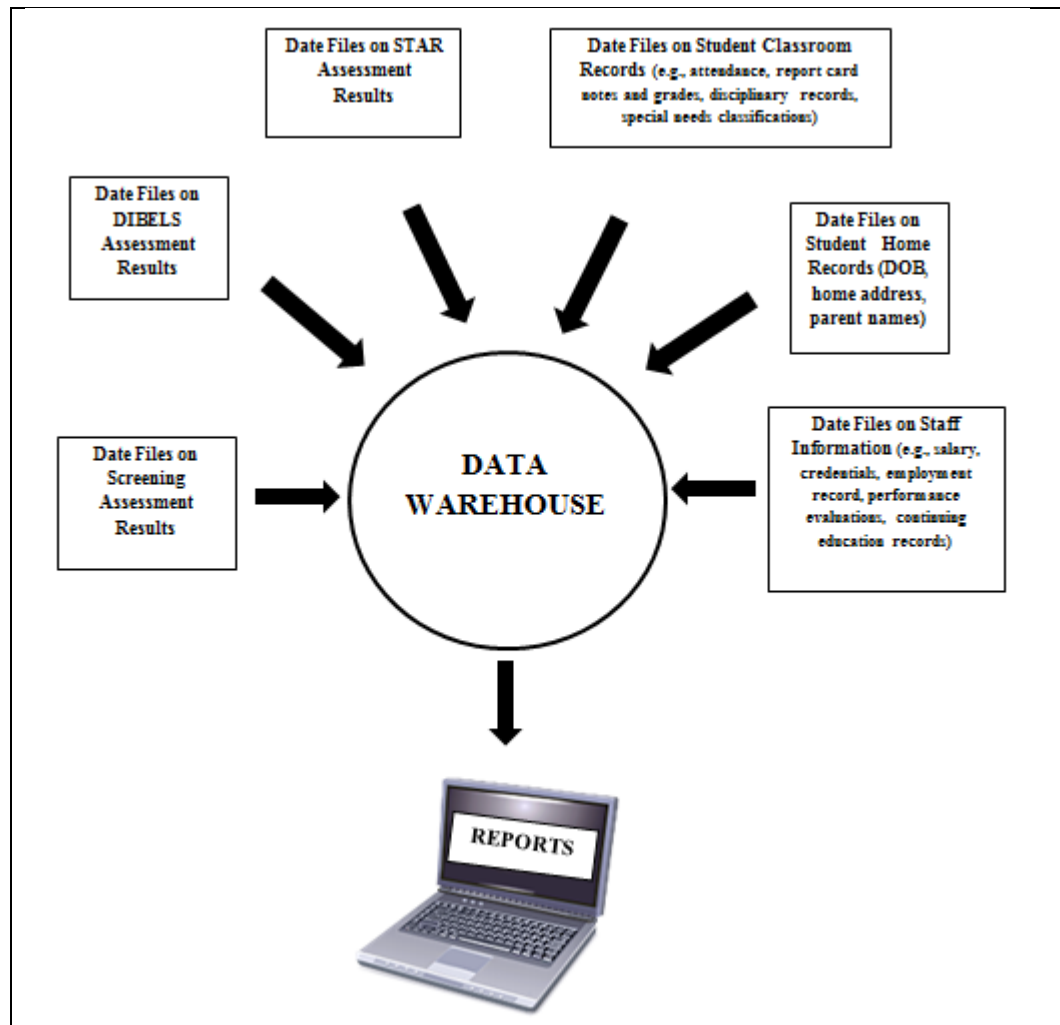
4) Recommendations to develop data system so that multiple data sources can be integrated to improve data analysis and reporting?

Currently, some forms of data are not readily accessible because they originate in in

different locations and different databases. For example, DIBELS benchmark and progress monitoring data and STAR data is kept in a program called I-Tracker. Report card grades are kept in a program called eSchool. There is no way to connect the two so that teachers can look at both types of data simultaneously. In addition, other data sources are also in separate systems and it is difficult combine this data for more advanced analysis and planning needs. This situation adds to the amount of time needed to access data and to create useful reports and it makes it prohibitively difficult to investigate some questions that require combining data from different areas. This is a situation found in many schools as reported by Ingram, Seashore-Louis, and Schroeder (2004) and others (Coburn, Toure, & Yamashita, 2009).

As shown in Figure 5.2, a data warehousing system that integrates all data sources would make it much easier for teachers and leaders to monitor students' academic growth, to analyze curriculum and instructional effectiveness, to aid instructional planning, to enable developing more targeted interventions, and to guide the design and evaluation of new programs. There is much advocacy in the literature to encourage district to create data warehousing systems and research shows that when more data are available and are easy to access, school level staff are more likely to engage in data-driven instructional planning and evaluation (Bernhardt, Victoria L. 2004; Datnow, A., Park, V., & Wohlstetter, P., 2007; Mandinach, E. B., & Honey, M., 2008; Roland, P. & Elovitz, L., 2005).

Figure 5.2: Type of Data Warehousing System that would Benefit MECC



Chapter 6

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

At Morris ECC, as in virtually all schools, the majority of students from families in poverty enter kindergarten with deficiencies in language development and school readiness skills. Most of these students score in the “red” and “yellow” literacy areas on the incoming kindergarten screening assessment indicating they are slightly behind to severely behind in reading development. They end up at the “intensive” level on the beginning of the year DIBELS benchmark assessment.

The purpose of this chapter is to review research that can inform my own understanding of the role of poverty in early language development. It will help me develop practical information and materials for parents so that they can do as much as possible to support the language development of their children. While many parents are challenged with a variety of difficulties connected with poverty and most cannot do much to change their economic circumstances, they can exercise control over their parenting and language interactions with their child (Halgunseth, 2009). It is my hope that if parents are aware that poverty can create difficult conditions and challenges for early language development and are aware of what they can do to help their child with language development, they will be more likely and able to help their child develop strong language skills. I begin by summarizing key findings from research showing how the typical home environment of poverty makes it much more difficult for children to “catch up” to their peers not living in poverty.

Then I present a narrative describing what research encourages as optimal parenting

for robust language development. To simplify the style, I present this as a story about “the language developing mother,” or LD mother. I recognize that the person doing the parenting can be a father, grandparent, or guardian. What is important are the behaviors that go into creating a nurturing, cognitively stimulating, and language rich home environment. Usually it is the mother who has the primary role in creating this environment, hence my use of the term “LD mother.”

I conclude with thoughts about other interventions MECC might consider and a first step which is the development of some parent materials to encourage and communicate about optimal parenting for developing strong language skills.

6.2 Poverty and Adverse Impacts on Early Childhood Language Development

6.2.1 Definition of Poverty

Poverty is defined several different ways. The Census Bureau defines poverty as, “A set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered in poverty (2013).” Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) describe poverty as, “The condition of not having enough income to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Because children are dependent on others, they enter or avoid poverty by virtue of their family’s economic circumstances.”

6.2.2 Importance of the Problem

While the definition of income poverty describes monetary constraints, there are multiple risks to children’s language development incurred from the environment of poverty. According to Gary Evans in *The Environment of Childhood Poverty*, there are multiple risk

factors for children in poverty:

Poor children confront widespread environmental inequities. Compared with their economically advantaged counterparts, they are exposed to more family turmoil, violence, separation from their families, instability, and chaotic households. Low income children are read to relatively infrequently, watch more TV, and have less access to books and computers. Low-income parents are less involved in their children's school activities. Predominantly low-income schools and day care are inferior. (Evans, 2004, p. 77).

As a result, poverty negatively impacts a child's academic success. Burkam and Lee explain this in the following:

A key goal of education is to make sure that every student has a chance to excel, both in school and in life... (but) the inequalities of children's cognitive ability are substantial right from 'the starting gate.' Disadvantaged children start kindergarten with significantly lower cognitive skills than their more advantaged counterparts.” (Burkam and Lee, 2002, p. 2)

A study by Hart and Risley (1995) compared the child-directed language of mothers from different levels of socio-economic status. They found that children of professionals were, on average, exposed to approximately 1,500 more words hourly than children growing up in poverty. This resulted in a gap of more than 32 million words by the time the children reached the age of four. Evans, in *American Psychologist*, (2004, p80) writes, “Low income children experience substantially less cognitive stimulation and enrichment in comparison with wealthier children. Low-income parents compared to middle-income parents speak less often and in less sophisticated ways to their young children, and as the children grow older,

low-income parents are less likely than middle-income parents to engage jointly with their children in literary activities such as reading aloud or visiting the library (2004). Bellafonte in *Before A Test, A Poverty of Words* writes, “It is difficult to overstate the advantages arrogated to a child whose parent proceeds in a near constant mode of annotation. Reflexively, the affluent, ambitious parent is always talking, pointing out, explaining: Mommy is looking for her laptop; let’s put on your rain boots; that’s a pigeon, a sand dune, skyscraper, a pomegranate. The child, in essence, exists in continuous receipt of dictation” (Bellafante, 2012, p 1).

6.2.3 Multiple Risk Factors

In the article “Cumulative Risk and Low-Income Children’s Language Development” Chapman, Chapman, Kaiser, and Hancock (2004) break down the potential detrimental side effects from poverty by explaining the concept of “risk”. They define “risk” as, “Exposure to the biological and environmental conditions that increase the likelihood of negative developmental outcomes. (2004, p. 227). They further state, “Poverty places children at increased risk for a host of problems beginning at conception” (2004, p. 227). The more “risk” factors that a child has, the higher the probability will be that a child will have a future language disorder (2004). They also explain that environmental variables that have been associated with language problems include higher birth order, low maternal education, poor mother-child interactions, father absenteeism, several stress life events in the previous year, and single parent homes, adding that, “Low-income children are exposed to a substantially greater number of environmental risk factors than their middle income counterparts” (2004, p. 229).

6.2.4 Potential of Identification of Special Education Needs

In the article, “The Effects of Poverty on Children,” Brooks-Gunn and Duncan document the increased risk for children in poverty to be identified as needing special education services. They state, “Children living below the poverty threshold are 1.3 times as likely as non-poor children to experience learning disabilities and developmental delays” (1997, p. 61). Brooks-Gunn and Duncan referred to a study that compared children from the NLSY and children from the IHDP. The results of the study showed that “Poorer children scored between 6 and 13 points lower on various standardized tests of IQ, verbal ability, and achievement” (1997, p. 61). These points could be “The difference between being placed in a special education class or not” (1997, p. 61). More significant for Morris staff, however, was the following finding: “The smallest differences appeared for the earliest (age two) measure of cognitive ability; however, the sizes of the effects were similar for children from three to eight. These findings suggest that the effects of poverty on children’s cognitive development occur early” (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997, p. 61).

Children can be identified as needing special education services for cognitive delays and for emotional and behavioral delays. Children with emotional and behavioral concerns can be identified as a special education student using the “emotionally disturbed” special education classification. The State of Delaware’s Title 14 Special Populations Administrative Code defines “Emotionally Disturbed” as “a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors...” (Title 14 Education 900 Special Populations, 2011) Brooks-Gunn and Duncan’s research shows that, “Poor children suffer

from emotional and behavioral problems more frequently than non-poor children... four-to eight-year-olds persistent poverty (defined as a specific percentage of years of live during which the child lived below the poverty level) was positively related to the presence of internalizing symptoms.” (1997, p. 62).

6.2.5 Implications for Morris Early Childhood Center and Parent Support Initiatives

Because the link between poverty and language development delays is so significant, “Early identification of these children is important to ensure that they will be placed in the appropriate remedial programs designed to minimize or eliminate the effects of these risks (Chapman, Chapman, Kaiser, Hancock, 2004, p. 227). They continue by stating, “In addition to child-focused services such as speech and language therapy, intervention programs need to consider strategies for reducing the effects of the various risk factors these children experience.” More evidence for this comes from research by Rowe (2004) who examined how parent socio-economic status and beliefs affect parent-child communication and how these variables in turn affect early childhood language development. Rowe (2004), p. 201 writes:

The relationship found here between parental beliefs about child development and aspects of parental communication with toddlers adds to the previous research on relations between parental beliefs and practices. Specifically, the results indicate that parents who hold beliefs about child development that are more in line with information offered by experts, pediatricians and textbooks, talk more, use more diverse vocabulary and longer utterances, and produce a smaller proportion of directive utterances during their everyday interactions with their toddlers, than

parents who do not hold these beliefs. Importantly, these are aspects of child-directed speech found conducive to language learning. These findings are consistent with previous findings that parents who understand their children's abilities are best able to structure their child's environment to the cognitive level of the child (Miller & Davis, 1992), thus providing challenging communicative experiences within the child's zone of proximal development, experiences likely to promote optimal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

As a result, it is imperative that MECC has supports in place to help support our students in poverty as soon as the school year commences. At the same time, the school and the district need to do as much as possible in terms of providing family support and education about ways to help students develop strong reading and language skills.

6.3 The Language-Developing Mother

“From birth to five years of age, a child's motor, language, social, emotional, and intellectual development proceeds more rapidly than at any other time in their lives. During these first five years, a child quickly develop the mental, social, and motor capacities that prepare them to be able to successfully interact with their environment socially, intellectually, and physically” (Gurian, 2012, p.3). As a result, it is imperative that parents and caregivers support all aspects of a child's development.

The following describes optimal parenting for promoting strong and confident language development over the first five years of a child's life to give a child the best chance to grow to reach their full potential. I use the term “the language developing mother” (LD mother) while usually it is the mother, recognizing that the person doing the parenting can be

a father, grandparent, or guardian. It is the amount and kind of communication that is important that goes into creating a nurturing, cognitively stimulating, and language rich home environment.

6.3.1 Year One: Promoting Speech Development

The LD mother promotes speech development as soon as her baby is born. “Studies in the past have shown that babies of just a few months in age can distinguish between language sounds. But new research suggests that at just a few hours old, babies' brains can differentiate between the sounds of a mother's voice and that of one they haven't been exposed to” (Condcliffe, 2013, p.3). From day one, the LD mother gazes into her baby’s eyes and speaks softly and directly to the baby exposing him to the patterns and cadences of speech. As the baby begins to make cooing and babbling sounds, the LD mother encourages these utterances by repeating the sounds and smiling to encourage and reward these verbalizations. The LD mother also encourages and rewards gestures so baby can express his needs and have them met (Invest in Kids, 2003).

Through these interactions, the baby learns to connect words and gestures and to respond to the LD mother’s voice. He learns that vocalizing results in attention and that different utterance can evoke different responses. The more he responds, the more LD mother responds; and vice versa. This is the beginning of verbal communication.

6.3.2 Year One: Developing Social/Interpersonal Confidence and Competence

Social and interpersonal development supports speech development. The LD mother meets her baby’s needs immediately when he is crying. He learns he can depend on his

mother's support. To further promote his socialization, the LD mother exposes her baby to different environments and people in public settings. This builds baby's confidence to feel comfortable interacting with new people in new situations. Over time, the baby becomes comfortable in different surroundings and curious about new surroundings, rather than fearful and shy. "He interacts with new people and plays and tests social reactions of others by doing 'unusual' or 'naughty things.' The baby will also begin to play interactive games such as 'peek-a-boo' and 'patty-cake'" (Gurian, 2012, p. 2).

6.3.3 Years Two and Three: Fostering a Sense of Security

Each month the LD mother continues to expose baby to new and different people and environments that require different sets of rules and expectations. For example, she will take him to the library and encourage him to sit and listen to another adult read a story while she is still close by to offer needed support. The LD mother fosters independence by allowing the child to try things by himself or make choices. She may lay out different sets of clothes for the child to wear and so the child chooses from options provided. These supports foster the toddler's sense of security.

The LD mother's parenting help the toddler gain control over his emotions. When needs are not met or his wants are thwarted, the toddler may express anger with tears and tantrums. But the LD mother responds calmly, firmly, and consistently, and the toddler learns what is appropriate behavior or managing his feelings. In addition, the toddler is learning how his actions can make other people happy. He has a sense of self now and begins to understand how his choices and actions affect other people (Invest in Kids, 2003).

6.3.4 Years Two and Three: Promoting Speech Development

The LD mother talks a lot to her toddler. In his second and third year the LD mother encourages the toddler's verbalizations and connects words with objects and actions. The LD mother talks about objects and gives them names; and talks about ideas such as time, color, size, and opposites; and she asks questions that require responses (Invest in Kids, 2003). When the toddler a child is having a hard time identifying a feeling or explaining how he is feeling, the adult will scaffold for him by providing words, modeling, and asking appropriate questions.

For example, if the toddler says "yellow sun", the parent responds, "Yes, I can see the yellow sun."

As toddlers develop a sense of themselves as individuals, they learn to use words in addition to, or instead of, action to express their needs and reactions. By the end of toddlerhood the child uses language to express his needs and feelings and to interact with others in more diverse ways (Gurian, 2012, p.3). Many children are also stringing three and four words together by the end of their third year and are able to take part in conversations. They can tell an adult what to do when they are hungry or thirsty and are able to use prepositions, name one color, and have a mastery of simple grammatical rules (Invest in Kids, 2003).

6.3.5 Years Two and Three: Developing Social/Interpersonal Confidence and Competence

The LD mother helps the toddler's social and interpersonal confidence in many ways, one of which is games. For example, the LD mother plays games like "Candyland" and "Go Fish" with the child that requires the child to take turns and that teach the child that they will

not always be the “winner.” The LD mother praises the child for taking turns appropriately and responding appropriately to winning and losing.

Another way the LD mother helps with the toddler’s confidence and sense of security is by maintaining regular rituals and routines during the day and at bedtime (Guirian, 2012, p. 2).

6.3.6 Years Four and Five: Fostering a Sense of Security

The LD mother fosters a sense of security with her child by anticipating situations that may stress her child. For instance, if it is her child’s first trip to the dentist, she will prepare him ahead of time by talking about it so he knows what to expect or read a book about the dentist office (Invest in Kids, 2003).

6.3.7 Years Four and Five: Promoting Speech Development

The LD mother helps her child develop both expressive and receptive language skills. Expressive language skills now include the ability to, “Use connected sentences, tell experiences or simple events in sequence, reproduce short verses, rhymes, songs from memory, argue with words, use jokes and silly language, use sentences of at least five words, act out simple stories, [and] in conversation, can answer questions, give information, repeat, convey ideas... ask questions” (Guirian, 2012 p. 3). Receptive language skills include the ability to “understand implications of key words such as ‘because’, understand comparatives such as pretty, prettier, and prettiest, listen to long stories... [and] understand sequencing of events” (Guirian, 2012, p. 3).

Adults continue to promote speech development by exposing the children to a

language rich environment. They read to the child daily, expose him to new situations so that new vocabulary words are introduced, and interact with him with meaningful conversations. The children have the opportunity to use language regularly as parents hold conversations with them (Risley, 2006, p. 3).

6.3.8 Years Four and Five: Developing Social/Interpersonal Confidence and Competence

Around four and five years of age the LD mother's child social and interpersonal confidence and competence reaches new milestones. A four and five year old child, "Seeks out same-sex friends, prefers children over adults, enjoys performing for others, whispers and has secrets, responds to blame and praise, can be bossy, is becoming competitive, [and] enjoys helping at home, with tasks such as watering plants, [and] picking up toys" (Guirian, 2012, p. 2). These positive social skills help enable a child be successful in school situations. For example, a child with this skill set is able to interact appropriately with his peers by playing cooperatively and following rules. They are able to; "Practice taking turns, comply with your request, [and] know what it means to follow the rules in a game" (Invest in Kids, 2003).

The LD mother fosters this social and interpersonal confidence and competence by giving her child daily opportunities to interact with peers in preschool, daycare, or play date situations. The LD mother plays games with her child and every day models appropriate social skills like taking turns and following rules.

6.4 Support to Improve MECC's Student's School Success

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this chapter was to develop

an essay and practical information that could be converted into materials to help educate parents about the adverse consequences for children's language development that typically result from growing up in poverty. As a result, I have created two pamphlets that we share with parents when they register their child for kindergarten.

The first pamphlet is Appendix G and is titled "*Kindergarten Readiness*". It was created by our kindergarten team during a professional learning community (PLC) meeting in April, 2012. The pamphlet provides parents with information about what reading, math, and writing readiness for kindergarten looks like. For example, a child who is showing reading readiness for kindergarten is able to look at pictures and retell a story. In addition, reading, math, and writing activities are suggested and explained to assist parents with helping their child attain kindergarten readiness skills in each area.

The second pamphlet is Appendix H and is titled, "*Ten Internet Sites to Help Your Child Read*". It was also created by the kindergarten team during the April 2012 PLC. The pamphlet provides internet sites that pertain to reading and oral language. It describes two websites each in detail for storytelling, reading comprehension, phonics, and writing. In addition, it also provides seven websites for music.

6.5 Next Steps for MECC's Administration and Faculty

Now that we understand the impact that parents have on a child's development, it is imperative that we make an even greater attempt to inform families about the importance of interacting positively with their child and being aware of kindergarten expectations. This will improve incoming kindergarten student's readiness for kindergarten. There are several steps that we are taking at MECC to assist with this. First, we have written a grant through

the Delaware Department of Education for students who performed in the “yellow” or “red” range on the incoming kindergarten screening assessment. The grant will enable 120-150 incoming kindergarten students to receive six weeks of reading, math, and social skill intervention prior to entering kindergarten in the fall. In addition, parenting classes will be held in conjunction with the summer school program. The parent workshops will include topics such as “How Do I Read to My Child” and “What Do I Do When My Child Won’t Listen”.

A second step that we are taking is to have bi-monthly “Make and Take” workshops for parents. These workshops will focus on reading, writing, or math and begin with an explanation of kindergarten Common Core State Standards in each area. Parents will then be divided into classrooms where they will work with a MECC teacher to make an activity that will support that curriculum area. They will then take the finished product home to use with their children.

A third step that we have already begun is to partner with local daycares in the Milford School District. We have sent them the “*Kindergarten Readiness*” and “*Ten Internet Sites to Help Your Child Read*”. In addition, our special education coordinator has sent over a list of developmental milestones for each year of a child’s life from year one to year five. We have asked the daycares to contact us with names of children who do not seem to be meeting these milestones so that we can determine if they may benefit from our pre-kindergarten program. We are planning to invite the daycare providers to the bi-monthly “Make and Take” workshops as well as the parent workshops from the DOE grant so that they become more informed about strategies and activities to use in their daycare settings.

A final step that we are taking is to send weekly voice messages over the phone in

English and Spanish. The voice message will include a weekly reading, writing, or math activity and strategy to use with their child. Parents will be encouraged to contact their child's teacher with additional questions about the activity or strategy that was introduced.

Once implemented, these four additional steps will assist in having more children enter MECC ready for kindergarten.

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Appendix A

PARAPROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

1. How is your communication with the reading specialist? Do you feel you have enough time for daily communication?
2. Is the amount of support that you get from the reading specialist sufficient?
3. Are you comfortable working with Tier III children since they are the most at risk group?
4. Is one-half hour daily enough time to plan for your groups? Is this time being used effectively?

Appendix B

TEACHER QUESTIONS

1. How is your communication with the reading specialist? Do you feel you have enough time for daily communication?
2. Have you changed your instruction during Target Time to focus on identified weaknesses? Is this different from what you did last year?
3. Do weekly Learning Community meetings provide adequate planning time for Target time planning? What materials are you using to provide instruction on targeted skills?
4. What do you think about the MacMillan reading program? Are there skills that are weak that may cause Tier I children to move to Tier II?
5. Would you rather work with the intensive students rather than having paraprofessionals provide the interventions? Do you feel that having paraprofessionals push in for Target time would be more beneficial?

Appendix C

READING SPECIALIST QUESTIONS

1. How is your communication with the teachers? Do you feel you have enough time for daily communication?
2. Do weekly Learning Community meetings provide adequate planning time for Target time planning?
3. What do you think about the MacMillan reading program? Are there skills that are weak that may cause Tier I children to move to Tier II?
4. Would you rather have teachers work with the intensive students rather than having paraprofessionals provide the interventions? Do you feel that having paraprofessionals push in for Target time would be more beneficial?

Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES SHERRI KIJOWSKI MACILVAINE ECC CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

1. How is targeted reading instruction given at your school? Who provides instruction to each Tier of students?

Children are grouped heterogeneously in classrooms. Differentiated instruction is done in a push in model. The building reading specialist, para, and teacher, all work with the children in small groups. These small groups are homogeneously grouped by student's literacy needs. We use the DIBELS as a diagnostic assessment as well as a screening assessment. Tier 3 children get extra instruction from the reading specialist 4 times a week for 30 minutes.

Each child also does a cold read using Reading A to Z. This data is also used.

2. How much time for planning do your teachers get for RtI intervention time?

Our teachers get a 50 minute planning time daily. Once a month on their planning time, the principal and the reading specialist, achievement liaison teacher meet. One time a month they have "E Day". On this day, teachers have a 90 minute planning time that is led by one of those 3 people. They are focusing on writing at this time. ALT focuses on comprehension. Using "Successful Strategies for Reading in the Data Days are done 1x a month with principal, lead teacher, ALT, and reading specialist to look at data to make intervention changes. After meeting, this is shared with teachers. Each teacher then does a literacy action plan that is submitted to principal and interventionist. It has goals and processes that they will be working towards and using. Then, the team meets again.

3. Are there any changes that you would like to make to your intervention time? Why?

If she could wave a magic wand, she wishes she had more leveled materials.
-the special ed and kids that just aren't making progress.

4. What do you think about your core reading program? Are there skills that are weak that may cause Tier I children to move to Tier II?

They use Harcourt Trophies 2007 copyright. It does seem to match k needs, but it lacks comprehension substance.

Appendix D - continued

5. How effective has your targeted instruction been in moving children to benchmark and keeping benchmark students at that level?

Yes, she feels that what has helped most is the fact that Sherri has controlled the master schedule-when whole group literacy, small group, etc. They have planned the day around the intervention teachers.

Tier I kids are getting core and small group reading time which is 30 minutes.

Appendix E

KINDERGARTEN SCREENING MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Screening Date:	Evaluator:
Child's Name:	Child's Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
Child's Primary Language:	Child's Birth Date:
Child's Address:	Home Phone Number:
	Cell Phone Number:
	Work Phone Number:
	E-mail:
Mother's Name:	Father's Name:

Child can recite the alphabet: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Identifies Upper Case Letters

A		G		M		S		Y		Scale ☐ 0-5 (Red) ☐ 6-19 (Yellow) ☐ 20-26 (Green)	Comments
B		H		N		T		Z			
C		I		O		U					
D		J		P		V					
E		K		Q		W					
F		L		R		X					

Can child say the letters in his/her name? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Identifies Lower Case Letters

a		g		m		s		y		Scale ☐ 0-5 (Red) ☐ 6-19 (Yellow) ☐ 20-26 (Green)	Comments
b		h		n		t		z			
c		i		o		u					
d		j		p		v					
e		k		q		w					
f		l		r		x					

Identifies Letter Sounds

a		g		m		s		y		Scale ☐ 0-5 (Red) ☐ 6-19 (Yellow) ☐ 20-26 (Green)	Comments
b		h		n		t		z			
c		i		o		u					
d		j		p		v					
e		k		q		w					
f		l		r		x					

Appendix E - continued

Identifying Colors

Identifying Shapes

Red		____/11 ☐ 1-3 (Red) ☐ 4-7 (Yellow) ☐ 8-11 (Green)	Circle		____/8 ☐ 1-3 (Red) ☐ 4-7 (Yellow) ☐ 8-11 (Green)	Comments
White						
Purple						
Black						
Orange						
Pink						
Green						
Yellow						
Brown						
Blue						
Gray						

Comments: Conversation Talk with the child. Can the child verbally tell the following information: <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">First Name</td> <td style="width: 10%;">☐ Yes</td> <td style="width: 10%;">☐ No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age or Birthday</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Identify Gender</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> </tr> </table> Comments:	First Name	☐ Yes	☐ No	Last	☐ Yes	☐ No	Age or Birthday	☐ Yes	☐ No	Identify Gender	☐ Yes	☐ No	Comments: Behavior <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Separates from adult</td> <td style="width: 10%;">☐ Yes</td> <td style="width: 10%;">☐ No</td> <td style="width: 10%;">☐ Some</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cries/whines</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> <td>☐ Some</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Answers questions</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> <td>☐ Some</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pays attention</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> <td>☐ Some</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Excessive movement</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> <td>☐ Some</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Understands directions</td> <td>☐ Yes</td> <td>☐ No</td> <td>☐ Some</td> </tr> </table> Comments:	Separates from adult	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some	Cries/whines	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some	Answers questions	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some	Pays attention	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some	Excessive movement	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some	Understands directions	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some
First Name	☐ Yes	☐ No																																			
Last	☐ Yes	☐ No																																			
Age or Birthday	☐ Yes	☐ No																																			
Identify Gender	☐ Yes	☐ No																																			
Separates from adult	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		
Cries/whines	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		
Answers questions	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		
Pays attention	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		
Excessive movement	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		
Understands directions	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Some																																		

Number Identification

***Check only the numbers identified correctly.**

Counting

1		____/10 ☐ 1-4 (Red) ☐ 1-9 (Yellow) ☐ All 10 (Green)
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
up		All 10 (Green)

0		11		____/10 ☐ 1-4 (Red) ☐ 1-9 (Yellow) ☐ All 10 (Green)
1		12		
2		13		
3		14		
4		15		
5		16		
6		17		
7		18		
8		19		
9		20		
10				All 10 (Green)

Appendix E - continued

Positional Words			Concept Words			Scale
	Yes	No		Yes	No	/10
Over			Biggest			☐ 1-4 (Red) ☐ 1-9 (Yellow) ☐ All 10 (Green)
Under			Littlest			
Beside			Longest			
Between			Shortest			
Middle			Tallest			

Writing Name

Holds pencil correctly ☐ Yes ☐ No

Child's Name:

Evaluator's Comments:

MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT – STUDENT END-OF-MARKING PERIOD REPORT

Student:		Teacher:		Date Enrolled:		Grade	
WORK HABITS S = Satisfactory N = Needs Improvement				ATTENDANCE			
	1st MP	2nd MP	3rd MP		1st MP	2nd MP	3rd MP
Follows directions				Days Absent			
Organizes time and materials				Days Tardy			
Seeks help when needed							
Works independently							
Demonstrates effort							
Completes homework							
Completes classwork							
Cuts appropriately with scissors (K)							
SOCIAL SKILLS				SPEAKING AND LISTENING			
Works cooperatively with others				Listens attentively			
Demonstrates self-control				Responds to questions and text			
Follows school rules				Expresses ideas clearly			
Shows interest in classroom activities							
Demonstrates respect for self/ others				HANDWRITING			

O =Outstanding, Exceeds the standards (<i>Rding only</i>) S =Satisfactory, Meets the standards N =Needs Improvement, Approaching the standards U =Unsatisfactory, Below the standards Students must have an N, S or O by the 3rd MP to meet promotion.				Writing Stages – See attached description EX = Experimenting EM = Emerging DE = Developing CA = Capable PR = Proficient Shading represents trait taught but not assessed			
	1st MP	2nd MP	3rd MP		1st MP	2nd MP	3rd MP
Reading Comprehension				WRITING			
Reading Skills				Ideas			
				Organization			
Math				Conventions			
				Sentence Fluency			
Science/Social Studies				Word Choice			
				Voice			

FIRST MARKING PERIOD COMMENTS	SECOND MARKING PERIOD COMMENTS	THIRD MARKING PERIOD COMMENTS
Parent Conference Requested: Yes / No	Parent Conference Needed: Yes / No Your child is in danger of not meeting promotion: Yes/No	
Parent conference _____ Held		

Appendix F new.doc4/29/2014

Appendix G

KINDERGARTEN READINESS PAMPHLET

What does **writing** readiness look like?

- Prints first name correctly (first letter is a capital letter and the other letters are lowercase)
- Prints a majority of alphabet letters correctly with and/or without a model
- Has an effective pencil grasp
- Attempts to tell a story using a drawing
- Draws a picture with more than one color and includes some details in the picture

What activities can I do to help get my child ready to write?

- Offer your child a variety of different writing utensils such as crayons, pencils, chalk, markers
- Encourage your child to draw a picture about their favorite part of a book that you have read to them
- Provide different materials for your child to write on with their writing utensils such as coloring books, plain paper, shaving cream, and sand



Helpful Websites to Visit

www.ehow.com-this website helps assess kindergarten readiness

childparenting.about.com- this website shares social skill development ideas to get children ready for kindergarten.

www.creativecastlepreschool.com/kindergarten- this website has a section describing kindergarten readiness skills

www.starfall.com- this website has many great letter and letter sound activities as well as opportunities to hear books read aloud. It is very engaging and interactive

www.sesamestreet.org/game_player-this website has interactive reading readiness games and ideas for parents as well

Ngfl-cymru.org-this website has interactive alphabet activities for children

 Pamphlet Contents Created by Morris ECC Faculty at April 2012 PLC

Milford School District



Kindergarten Readiness

We Come to School Ready to Learn!

8609 3rd Street
Lincoln, DE
19960

Telephone: 302-422-1650
Fax: 302-424-5447

Website: me.milfordschooldistrict.org

Appendix G – continued



Why is Kindergarten important?

Kindergarten marks the start of a child's formal education. A child's first school experiences can influence the way he or she relates to others for the rest of life. Success or failure at this stage can affect a child's well-being, self-esteem and motivation.

There are many things that parents can do with their children at home to ensure that they come to kindergarten ready to learn.



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♦ What does reading readiness look like?

- Shows signs of book awareness (front, back, title, author, illustrator)
- Identifies own first name in writing
- Answers questions about a short story
- Looks at pictures and retells a story
- Knows the letters of the alphabet out of order (capital and lowercase)
- Knows the sounds that each letter makes

What activities can I do to help get my child ready to read?

- Keep magnet letters on the refrigerator. Begin with only the letters in your child's first name. Ask your child to, "Get me the letter /m/. To add letter sound recognition to the game, ask your child to, "Get me the letter that says /mmmmm/.
- Write letters on index cards or pieces of paper and spread them out on the floor. Have your child drive a toy car or throw a bean bag onto the letter that you name.
- Read daily to your child. As you read, model moving your finger from left to right under each word. Ask your child questions such as, "What will happen next?" "What was your favorite part?"
- Write your child's name with a highlighter pen. Have your child use a pencil to trace inside the highlighted letters.

What does math readiness look like?

- Can match similar objects. For example: forks, spoons, socks, shoes, blocks
- Can order objects by size (smallest, largest, etc)
- Counts from 1-10
- Recognizes and writes numbers 0-10
- Recognizes and identifies basic shapes (square, circle, triangle, and rectangle)
- Begins to count with one to one correspondence (each object that is being counted is numbered in order)
- Can sort items by more than one attribute (color, size, and shape)
- Identifies the colors in an 8-count crayon box
- Exposure to words such as more, less, same, and different

What activities can I do to help my child get ready for kindergarten math?

- Keep magnet numbers on the refrigerator. Ask your child to find a certain number. Then ask them, "Find the number that comes after /2/."
- Write numbers with a crayon. Then, ask your child to trace over your number with a specific color until all colors have been used. We call this rainbow writing.
- Have your child help get dinner ready by counting out silverware for dinner. Or you can have them count a certain number of crackers that they may eat for snack.
- Have your child help you sort the laundry by color and type of clothing

Appendix H

TEN INTERNET SITES TO HELP YOUR CHILD READ PAMPHLET

Writing

http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/games_quizzes/postcards/index.asp

Create a seasonal postcard

Children can choose fun backgrounds and objects to create a picture. Once they create the picture, they write a message for their card. After the card is written, it will be posted on the site. You can then view the card, or see postcards from other students. Note: These cards are not e-mailed. To create the postcard, the children do the following:

1. Click on the Create a Postcard icon below. A new window will appear. Click on the question mark in the top right corner of the page for help.
2. After selecting the objects that the children want included, they drag the objects onto the postcard, and use the buttons in the top right corner to make the objects smaller or larger, or to rotate them.
3. Lastly, the children write their message in the space at the bottom.



Music

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/perfectpitch/>

Perfect Pitch - Multimedia exploration into the instruments of an orchestra

<http://www.dsokids.com/2001/rooms/musicroom.asp>

Dallas Symphony Orchestra Music Room - Listen, play and explore.

<http://www.nashvillesymphony.org/nsokids/>

Nashville Symphony Orchestra for Kids - Listen and learn about the instruments and the musicians.

<http://www.sphinxkids.org/index.html>

Sphinx Kids Classical Music - Interactive learning and games.

<http://www.carnegiehall.org/ORC/Games-and-Listening-Guides/>

Carnegie Hall Listening Adventures - Interactively learn about sound, music notation, text, and instruments.

<http://pbskids.org/mayaandmiguel/english/games/globalgroovin/game.html>

Global Groovin' - Mix music using instruments from around the world.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/4_11/music/mm/index.shtml

Musical Mysteries - Interactive activities about sound, rhythm, mood, and more. Use the links on the left.

*Pamphlet Contents Created by Morris ECC Faculty
at April 2012 PLC*

Morris Early
Childhood Center

We Come to School
Ready to Learn!

Ten Internet Sites to Help Your Child Read



MECC
8609 3rd Street
Lincoln, DE 19960

Telephone: 302-422-1650
Fax: 302-424-5447

Appendix H – continued



Storytelling

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/clifford1/index.htm>

This site includes interactive story-books that can be read in English or Spanish. Children can watch the author of “Clifford” books, Norman Bridwell, as he explains how he creates his stories. Phonics games such as letter and sound matching are also available. There is also the option to download apps onto an iPhone, iPad, or iPod. These apps are downloadable books that are read aloud to the children.

<http://www.starfall.com/n/level-c/index/load.htm?f>

This site consists of read alouds in different genres. The genres are plays, comics, folk tales, Greek myths, and Chinese fables. When the children click on each icon, they are given a choice of literature from which to choose. There are pictures from the literature so that even children that can't read are able to choose literature that interest them.

Reading Comprehension

<http://www.storyplace.org/preschool/other.asp>

This StoryPlace pre-school library is full of great activities for children to explore. There are 15 different themes that the children can choose. Each theme has an on-line story, an on-line activity, suggested readings, and a parent activity. Examples of themes include colors, fire fighters, trains, and music.

<http://www.sebastianswan.org.uk/index.html>

This site includes 9 different books. Each book is about an animal. The books tell stories about the animals. Each page includes an underlined word that is a link to a new page with additional facts about that word. For example, if the word “swan” is clicked on, it gives facts about swans. There are “thinking questions” included on each page as well. The site includes a parent's page, science links, and a blog from Sebastian the Swan.



Phonics

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/games#media/game>

This site includes all of the Sesame Street characters. Each character has a different phonics game to play with the children. These games include letter identification, letters and letter sound matching, and making three letter words. Three favorites are Elmo's Keyboard, Learning Letters with Big Bird and Alphabet Soup. The Sesame Street characters talk to the children by giving them directions to follow.

<http://www.learningplanet.com/act/abcorder.asp>

This site helps the children learn to put letters in abc order as well as familiarizes them with all 26 lower case letters. The letters are placed on a train track. As they appear, a voice says the letter name out loud. The children then have to find the missing letter. There is a speaker button that can be pushed as many times as needed to repeat the directions.

