

How Imagine Learning English Supports Response to Intervention (RTI)

There are a variety of descriptions for RTI, but most include these four components as key to effective intervention¹:

1. High-quality, scientifically-based classroom instruction
2. Ongoing student assessment
3. Tiered instruction
4. Family involvement





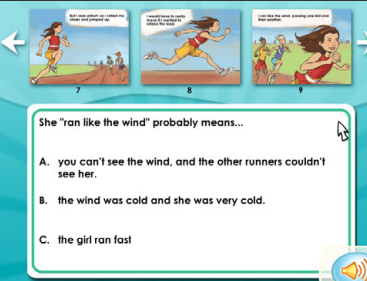
1. High-quality, scientifically based classroom instruction

High quality classroom instruction is described in many different ways, of course, but perhaps the best description comes from Denton (Children’s Learning Institute)², who identifies five “overriding research-supported characteristics of effective instruction for students with reading difficulties:

- a. Teach essential skills and strategies.
- b. Provide differentiated instruction based on assessment results and adapt instruction to meet students’ needs.
- c. Provide explicit and systematic instruction with lots of practice—with and without teacher support and feedback, and including cumulative practice over time.
- d. Provide opportunities to apply skills and strategies in reading and writing meaningful text with teacher support.
- e. Don’t just cover critical content; be sure students learn it—monitor student progress regularly and reteach as necessary.”

1a. Teaching essential skills: *Imagine Learning English* includes instruction in the five essential reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Essential Literacy Skills

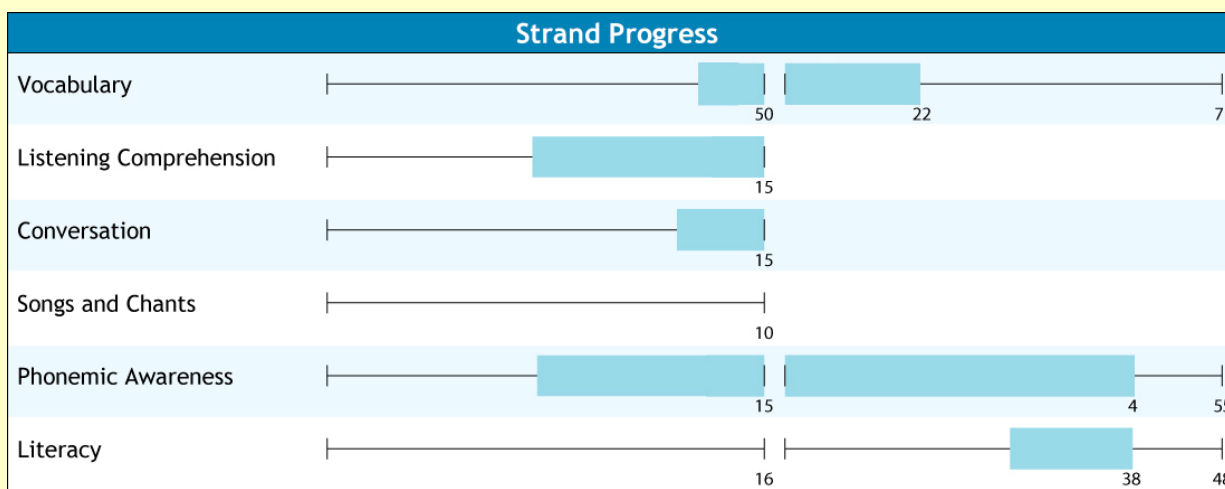
Essential Component of Effective Literacy Instruction	Example Activity
<p>Phonemic Awareness: Students practice rhyming, segmenting, and blending phonemes. Sample activity is one of over 90 and shows students how to segment the initial phoneme (/a/ in <i>address</i>).</p>	
<p>Phonics: Students practice letter/sound correspondences, blending sounds to read words, identifying sight words. They combine these skills to read decodable text. Sample activity is one of 290 activities teaching students to identify the sounds associated with vowel digraphs.</p>	
<p>Fluency: Students build fluency by echo reading with a model. Students listen to a model in order to develop expression, pronunciation and speed. Sample activity is one of 92 activities allowing students to record and compare their recording against a model. Recordings are stored so that teacher can review and monitor student progress.</p>	
<p>Vocabulary: Students begin by learning the meaning of basic reading words for decodable stories. Every reading word is defined and illustrated in a sentence within the phonics activities. Sample activity is one of 66 additional activities. It illustrates how important words are pre-taught before students read them in leveled text (44 selections, 3/4 of which are expository).</p>	
<p>Comprehension: Students begin by learning how to answer literal questions, then they move to inferential questions. Sample activity is one of 94 comprehension activities. When students encounter leveled text, they practice comprehension by answering more advanced questions: main idea, cause and effect, problem/solution, vocabulary, compare and contrast, intertextual, and author's purpose.</p>	

1b. Providing differentiated instruction: *Imagine Learning English* differentiates students' instruction in at least four ways:

1. The placement test determines separate starting points in vocabulary instruction, literacy instruction, and oral language development (see Figure 2).
2. The *Imagine Learning English* regulates or sequences instruction based on students' performance. If, for example, a student has mastered the vocabulary words for three lessons in a row, the program will accelerate instruction, streamlining activities. On the other hand, if a student is not mastering a concept, the program will re-teach it.
3. The student can receive first language support, which is strategically withdrawn as they become more familiar with each activity.
4. Students receive informative feedback tailored to their responses.

Figure 2: Differentiated Instruction




Placement and progress within the *Imagine Learning* lessons is indicated by horizontal blue bars (displayed in the student's individual summary report). Number at end of blue bar indicates current lesson:



1c. Provide explicit and systematic instruction with lots of practice

Imagine Learning English carefully instructs all new skills and strategies, explicitly explaining how to execute them. For example, when teaching how to answer an inferential question, Alex (an *Imagine Learning English* character) explains that you look in the book and use your head. Students then practice drawing inferences, and immediate feedback helps them find the correct page in the book and identifies the relevant background knowledge (see Figure 3). Students practice these question answering skills with 48 decodable books, which provide lots of practice.

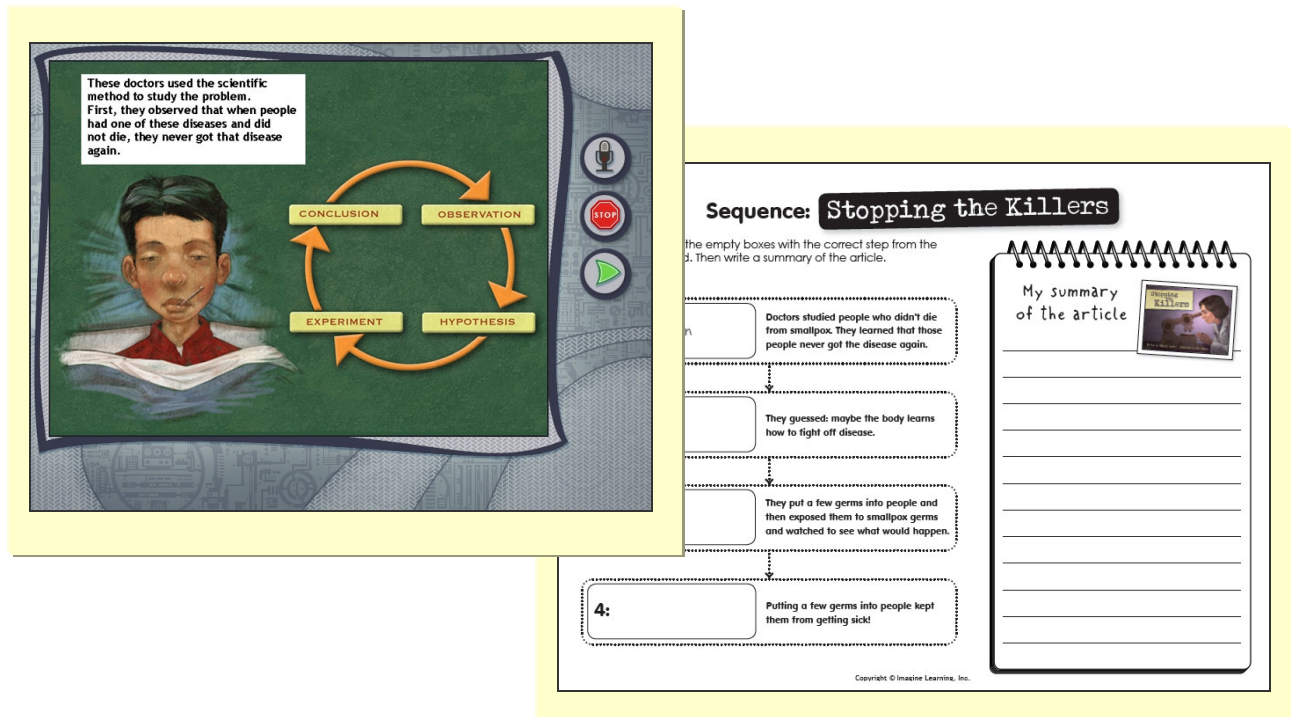
Figure 3: Explicit Instruction

<p>Alex describes how to answer an inferential question:</p>	<p>1. You look in the book</p>	<p>2. You “use your brain”—rely on background experience.</p>
	 <p>How does this girl feel about her teacher?</p> <p>A. She doesn't like her. B. She likes her clothes. C. She likes her.</p>	 <p>How does this girl feel about her teacher?</p> <p>A. She doesn't like her. B. She likes her clothes. C. She likes her.</p>

1d. Provide opportunities to apply skills and strategies in reading and writing meaningful text

Students practice their comprehension skill of summarizing while reading meaningful, natural leveled text that matches grade-level content learning. For example, when reading *Stopping the Killers*, students learn about the scientific method. They identify the steps in the scientific method in a graphic organizer as preparation for writing a summary (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Applying skills with meaningful text

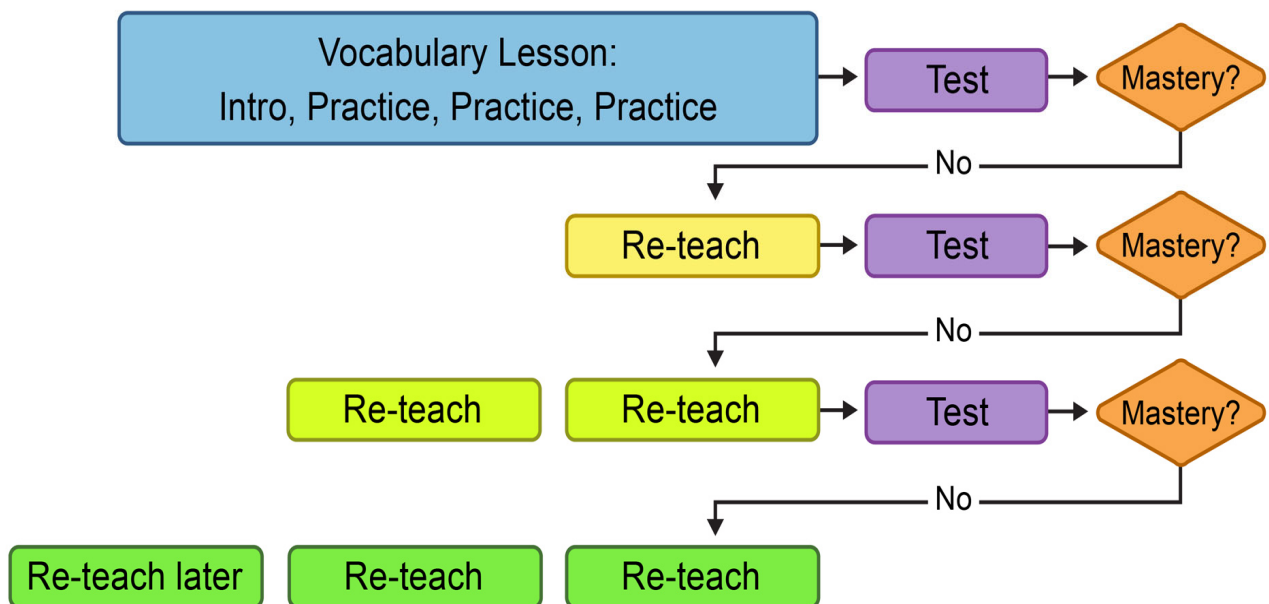


The figure consists of two main parts. On the left is a graphic organizer for the scientific method. It features a central illustration of a man reading a book. Surrounding him is a circular flow diagram with four steps: OBSERVATION, HYPOTHESIS, EXPERIMENT, and CONCLUSION. A text box above the diagram reads: "These doctors used the scientific method to study the problem. First, they observed that when people had one of these diseases and did not die, they never got that disease again." On the right is a worksheet titled "Sequence: Stopping the Killers". It includes a section for identifying steps from a story and a section for writing a summary. The story steps are: 1. Doctors studied people who didn't die from smallpox. They learned that those people never got the disease again. 2. They guessed: maybe the body learns how to fight off disease. 3. They put a few germs into people and then exposed them to smallpox germs and watched to see what would happen. 4. Putting a few germs into people kept them from getting sick. The summary section is titled "My summary of the article" and includes a small image of the book cover.

1e. Monitor student progress regularly and reteach as necessary.

Fortunately, the computer is very good at tracking progress and reteaching when scores indicate the need. Within the *Imagine Learning English* curriculum, scores are collected which immediately and directly affect the curriculum. If, for example, the software discovers that students have not mastered a set of vocabulary words, activities are selected for reteaching purposes. If their scores remain low, the software selects different activities to reteach the words. Finally, at the end of the vocabulary instruction for that level, the software checks for failed scores and, once again, reteaches. Figure 5 illustrates the logic used in the software that monitors student progress, reteaching when necessary. Each of the red oblongs represents an assessment activity. Each of the vertical blue arrows on the far left indicate a reteaching lesson. “R1” refers to the first time a skill is retaught, “R2” indicates the second time, and “REOS” indicates reteaching that takes place at the end of the strand.

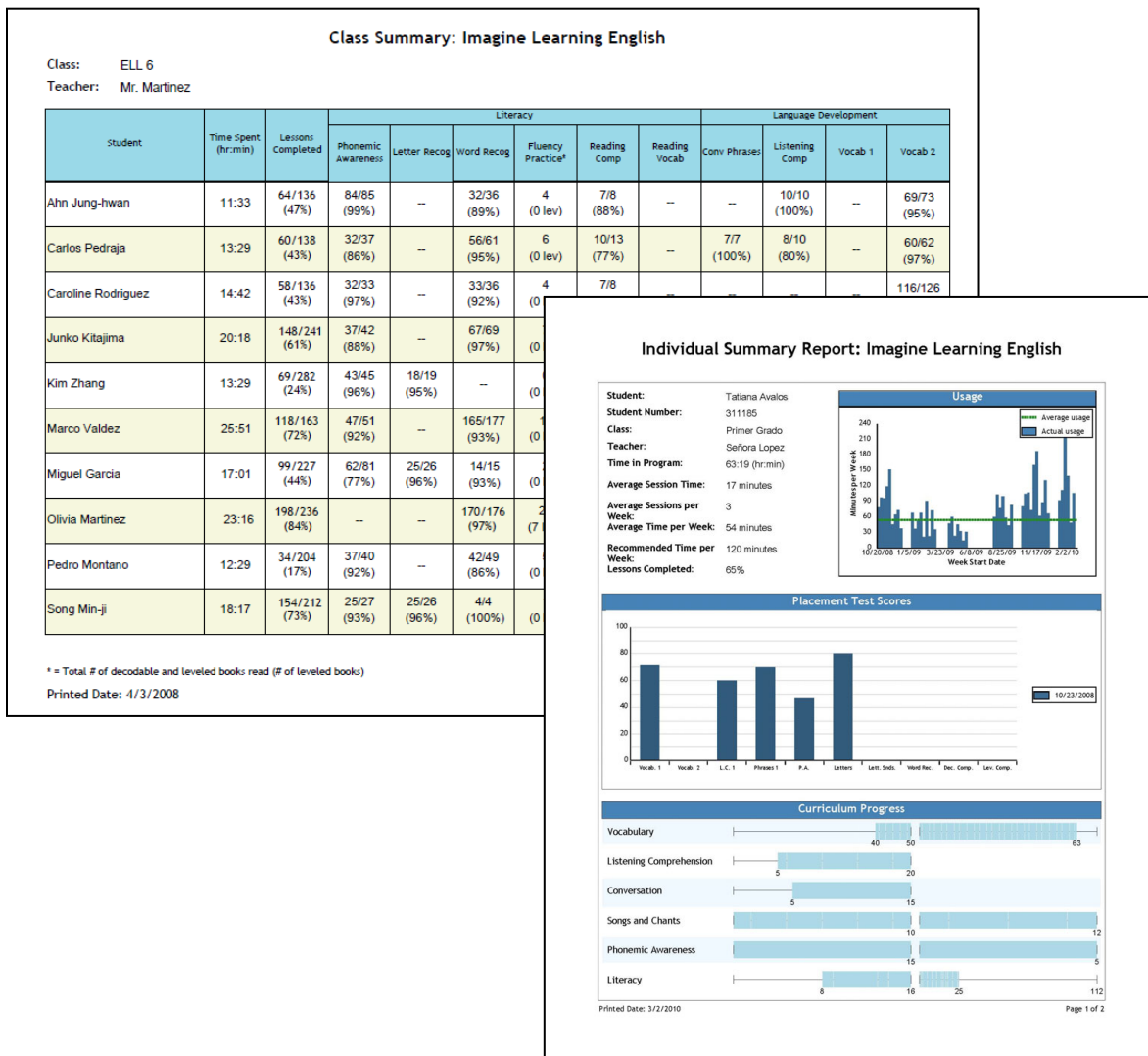
Figure 5: Monitoring progress, reteaching as needed



2. Ongoing student assessment (screening and progress monitoring provide info about student’s learning rate and level of achievement).

Imagine Learning English includes assessment activities embedded throughout the courseware. Students’ scores are collected and reported within two main reports: Individual Reports (two types—summary as well as detailed), and the Class Summary report. Since performance is reported the instant a student completes an assessment activity, teachers can retrieve up-to-the-minute status. The Class Summary report allows teachers to compare student performance with the rest of the class (see Figure 6). The class summary includes scores for both literacy and language development. The individual summary report shows their placement within the courseware, their pre- and post-test scores (the test is automatically administered at the beginning and end of the course plus teachers can assign to determine interim progress) and their scores for skill groups. The detailed summary report lists individual skills, mastered and unmastered.

Figure 6: Assessment results available for individual students and classes



3. Tiered Instruction

Tiered instruction applies to the level of intensity devoted to the student in order to improve learning outcomes. In classrooms, it specifically applies to whether a student receives well-crafted instruction as part of a class (Tier 1), a small group (Tier 2), or individually. Students' academic success affects whether or not they switch tiers. Students in any tier will benefit from *Imagine Learning English*. It's likely that if a student from Tier 1 were to be given *Imagine Learning English*, the need to switch to a more intensive tier or form of instruction might be eliminated. The type of instruction delivered by *Imagine Learning English* imitates that offered at Tier 3: one-on-one instruction with immediate feedback and automatic differentiation of instruction.

4. Family Involvement

Imagine Learning English makes it easy to communicate with parents through regular printouts written in students' home language. Printouts itemize students' accomplishments with reminders to practice and review important skills. Skills are listed and references to them are translated, so parents will be able to assist review and practice (see Figure 7, which shows the progress of a student at the beginning of the program).

Figure 7: Printouts for Parents



¹ According to the RTI Action Network, accessed at: <http://www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/What/ar/WhatIsRTI> (4/10/08)

² Denton, C. A. Classroom Reading Instruction That Supports Struggling Readers: Key Components for Effective Teaching. Children's Learning Institute, University of Texas Health Science Center: Houston, TX. Accessed at: <http://www.rtinetwork.org/Essential/TieredInstruction/Tier1/ar/EffectiveTeaching> (4/11/08)