

A Selected Review of Dr. Richard Allington's Scholarship
on Supporting Reading Development for Elementary-Aged Students

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to review a selection of Dr. Richard Allington's contributions to literacy instruction, and particularly on his scholarship on the development of reading instruction. In Chapter 1 I explain the rationale for the project, describe personal motivations for improving my own practice as it relates to reading instruction, give insight into why Allington's work is of interest to educators, and connect Allington's scholarship to provincial curriculum. In Chapter 2 I examine Allington's philosophy of reading instruction and reading theories in general before reviewing Allington's work around supporting readers who struggle. In Chapter 3 I summarize his work on summer reading loss and response to intervention. In Chapter 4 I explain how the PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Every Child, Every Day: Dr. Richard Allington's Scholarship on the Six Essential Elements of Effective Reading Instruction" connects to Allington's research. The professional development workshop, designed to provide teachers with information and methods they can use to support the development of the six principles outlined by Allington and Rachael Gabriel, serves as a culmination of my review of Allington's research for the project. The PowerPoint slides created for the professional development workshop are in the appendix. In Chapter 4 I also include recommendations for future research and share my reflections on the process of completing the project for my Master's of Education.

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Dedication

It is with gratitude and love that I dedicate this project to my family: Mom, Dad, Jim, Jason, Jenn, and Jesse. My parents instilled a deep value of education in me, championed my successes, and believed in my potential to succeed. Mom, your faith in me and pride in my accomplishments pushed me to exceed even my own expectations of myself: I am eternally grateful for your love and support.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Becoming a teacher was the realization of a dream I worked hard to achieve: I hope to never forget the feelings of excitement and joy I first experienced when going into schools as a volunteer and later to complete my practica. One of my favourite subjects as a child was Language Arts and the enjoyment I felt as a learner has since transferred to my enjoyment in teaching reading and writing.

On my extended practicum during my post degree professional program through the University of British Columbia in Castlegar, British Columbia, I taught Reading to academically above average Grade 4 students which was a straight-forward and enjoyable experience that my sponsor teacher guided me through. However, upon graduation I needed a job and so I accepted a position as a high school Special Education Teacher, which was contrary to my dream of becoming a primary teacher. And so I embarked on a six year journey feeling quite unqualified to help students who struggled abjectly in school and particularly with reading, but also had issues of poverty and challenging family dynamics as well as with very difficult life circumstances to contend with: behavioural disorders, intellectual disabilities for many due to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, with social-emotional problems manifesting as a result. However, in that position I grew alongside my students and realized that opportunities in life are not fairly distributed and that the idea of working harder to achieve success is not always a choice or dependent on a person's level of motivation. I came to see positive family dynamics, good health, supportive communities, access to resources, and intelligence as gifts to be appreciated.

As well, the high school students I was assigned to teach needed primary level remedial reading instruction and I had no course work in that area. It was a difficult task and my only consolation was that if other more experienced teachers had been unable to help these students, what could I do? With mentorship, experience, coursework, professional development, and increased resourcefulness on my part, my confidence in my own teaching abilities has grown substantially since I began teaching. But during those early years of my career, I focused my efforts on other aspects of teaching that I believed I was more skilled at such as connecting with students, trying to make school a safe and enjoyable place that they would want to attend, and teaching life skills. The learning curve for a beginning teacher is decidedly steep and feelings of being overwhelmed are not unusual.

During those six years one memory in particular is seared in my heart. A teenage boy saw a binder I had (labelled “Behaviours” so I could keep anecdotal notes required for tracking goals created for individual education plans). The boy’s name started with a “B” and he said, “Why do you have a binder with my name on it?” My heart sank as I realized he could not recognize his own name. This incident sparked contemplation in me as I grappled with feelings of inadequacy to help him and realized he was the first person I met who was illiterate, an issue I barely recognized as existing in Canada. I tried to comprehend how difficult his life was going to be, how even the simplest of life’s tasks would be so frustrating, and what an incredible disadvantage it is to struggle with reading.

Confidence comes from experience and knowledge. In choosing to focus on effective elementary level instruction and interventions I am hoping to become more skilled as a teacher so I can share that knowledge and improve my professional practice. Allington has created a legacy of accessible, practical, and interesting articles and books on improving literacy

instruction and success for all students. As a scholar Allington is set apart from other researchers in that he both respects teachers and aims to empower teachers by enabling educators to make informed decisions (Mallette & Barone, 2014, p. 6). As I embarked on the journey of learning about his work, I realized just how much learning I still have to do so I can effectively apply that knowledge to improving my instruction. However, an incentive for investing in my own capacity-building as an educator is that I will be better able to teach all of my students. Indeed, strengthening my skills will impact student performance and hopefully have a positive influence on the schooling trajectory for children in my classroom who struggle with reading as well.

Project Foci

Within the realm of literacy research, Richard Allington is a contemporary scholar whose work is revered by educators wanting to improve their practice and positively impact student growth in reading and writing. In deciding which researcher to focus on for this project, the work of Allington kept echoing throughout my coursework, journal articles, and professional development workshops. Recent results of a query that asked readers of *The Reading Teacher* to name one person whose research has influenced literacy teaching and or learning revealed that “a majority of the respondents (n=49, 64%) named one of two prominent and highly accomplished scholars, Richard Allington and Marie Clay, as having the greatest influence on classroom practice” (Mallette & Barone, 2014, p. 5). Both Allington and Clay are highly regarded literacy instructors whose work addresses both theoretical and practical concepts and issues. Focusing on Allington’s scholarship seemed a logical choice for my project as his ample contributions to literacy research provided me with choice in which aspects of his scholarship to review.

As a teacher there are many aspects of instruction I could focus on to improve my classroom practice but I find literacy compelling. Teaching children to improve their reading is engaging,

important work and a passion for reading instruction has developed in me since I began working. I believe reading is the cornerstone of education and my teaching experience has largely been comprised of helping students recognize their strengths in reading and working to build strength in areas of need. I am particularly interested in using the wisdom of Allington to assist me in strengthening my skills in working with readers who struggle, as well as sharing the knowledge I gain while studying Allington's work with colleagues. Most teachers do not have specialized subject area knowledge upon entering the profession. Unless an educator purposefully seeks out post-secondary instruction related to reading to supplement the general coursework completed during an undergraduate Education degree program, most of them will not acquire it. Learning about literacy instruction occurs largely on the job unless teachers have a keen interest in literacy and seek to improve their practice through professional development.

For my Master's project I examined selections of Richard Allington's vast contributions to literacy research and education, with a focus on reading instruction. As a scholar, Allington has expansive interests in literacy research so it was important I narrowed my foci for the purposes of this project by considering a *selection* of his work rather than comprehensively reviewing of all of his research interests. In reviewing the literature I began by looking at selections of Allington's scholarship that I believe to be most relevant to my own personal teaching practice and that I found most compelling and likely to impact my own practice: his writing on struggling readers, poverty and its effects on reading achievement, summer reading setback, Response to Intervention, current research on fluency, and finally, effective literacy instruction and interventions at both the primary and intermediate levels.

Although for the purposes of this project only a selection of Allington's work is discussed, it bears mentioning that he has also co-authored important books that focus on the broader context

of literacy support such as *Schools That Work: Where All Students Can Read and Write* (Allington & Cunningham, 2006) and several editions of *Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read and Write* (Cunningham & Allington, 2010) among other titles. Allington weaves his most powerful research findings throughout his scholarship so educators interested in his work will likely appreciate the consistency and recurring themes that emerge upon close examination of his scholarship.

Connections to Curriculum Documents

The Kindergarten to Grade 7 English Language Arts curriculum in British Columbia was updated in July 2015 with emphasis on the big ideas and core competencies required at each level of instruction designed to cultivate higher level thinking skills and deep learning. The rationale for the revision of the curriculum is to transform instruction to enable teachers to create learning environments that are both engaging and personalized for students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a).

The following big idea is identified first and appears throughout the revised K-7 curricula: that language and stories can be a source of creativity and joy (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b). Other big ideas listed at the Grades 2 and 3 levels stress the importance of using texts that help students learn about themselves and their community; understanding that everyone can be a reader and a writer; listening and speaking help to explore, share, and develop ideas; using language in creative and playful ways helps us understand how language works; and teaching strategies so readers can make sense of what they read, hear, and view (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b, pp. 3-4).

Core competencies stated for Grades 2 and 3 are outlined below and have been obtained directly from the Ministry website (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015b):

Using oral, written, visual, and digital texts, students are expected individually and collaboratively to be able to:

- Use play and other creative means to discover foundational concepts of print, oral, and visual texts
- Begin to use sources of information and prior knowledge to make meaning
- Use age-appropriate reading, listening, and viewing behaviours and strategies to make meaning from texts
- Engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers, as appropriate, to develop understanding of self, identity, and community
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and make meaning
- Recognize the importance of story in personal, family, and community identity
- Recognize the structures and elements of story
- Recognize how different text structures reflect different purposes
- Show awareness of how story in First Peoples' cultures connects people to family and community
- Develop awareness of how story in First Peoples' cultures connects people to land (identified in Grade 3 learning standards but not in Grade 2)
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding
- Create stories and other age-appropriate texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community
- Plan and create a variety of communication forms for different purposes and audiences [and]

- Communicate in print, using letters and words and applying basic conventions of English spelling, grammar, and punctuation. (pp. 3-4)

Allington's work connects to the big ideas and core competencies outlined in the updated British Columbia Language Arts curriculum as his work is similarly based on the notion that all students should be placed at the centre of their education. Underpinning the revised curriculum documents is the idea that teachers should recognize their classrooms are comprised of communities of learners; working with the big ideas affords educators the opportunity to meet each child wherever his/her learning is within that community. The revised curriculum notably omits prescribed learning outcomes making it less prescriptive and providing teachers the flexibility to work with overarching principles while tailoring instruction to meet the needs of each learner. Allington's scholarship is consistent with the provincial revised curriculum because he recognizes that reading instruction should be individualized and text selections that meet learner needs should be used throughout the school day; he likewise advocates for conversational talk as a tool to foster comprehension in both reading and writing; and that background knowledge, vocabulary, and awareness of writing and text conventions are best developed when students are engaged in contextualized literacy lessons that are meaningful and engaging.

Project Organization

The project is comprised of information derived from numerous articles written or co-authored by Allington and three of his books: *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers* (2012), *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/ Poor Reading Achievement Gap* (2013), and *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (2009). In Chapter 2 I introduce Allington's work, review his philosophy of reading instruction, situate his work in reading theories, and examine his research as it relates to readers who struggle. In Chapter 3 I focus on his work around

summer reading loss and response to intervention, make connections between themes in his work, summarize his recommendations, and offer a critique of his scholarship. In Chapter 4 I explain how the PowerPoint presentation I developed relates to Allington's scholarship, offer recommendations for future research stemming from his work, and reflect about the process of completing my Master of Education degree. The appendix contains copies of the PowerPoint presentation slides.

Chapter 2

Best Practices in Reading Instruction: Dr. Richard Allington's Research Contributions

A primary area of focus in Allington's career has been how to support students who struggle with reading. The aptly titled *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers* (Allington, 2012), a well-known title in the "*What Really Matters...*" series, serves as the focal text for this chapter. In Chapter 3 I examine *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/ Poor Reading Achievement Gap* (2013) which he co-authored with his wife, Anne McGill-Franzen, an esteemed literacy researcher in her own right, who like Allington is similarly based out of The University of Tennessee. Allington's *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (2009) is explored in the latter half of Chapter 3.

In this chapter I describe Dr. Allington's contributions to literacy research by beginning with an introduction to his work, giving an overview of his philosophy, and then situating his scholarship in theories of reading instruction. Next, I provide an overview on Allington's beliefs regarding readers who struggle including teacher accountability for all learners in their classroom, aspects of quality instruction, and teacher instructional decision-making based on contemporary research. Subsequently, I discuss Allington's stance on the inappropriateness of pairing paraprofessionals with the most vulnerable learners, and outline his beliefs about the fundamental importance of text-reader compatibility, and ineffective instructional programs and strategies.

Why Teachers Connect to Richard Allington's Work

Scholar, educator, and researcher Richard Allington writes about topics on effective literacy instructional practices. Allington's audience is educators - both researchers and teachers. As a former teacher himself, Allington knows how to write for his audience. Drawing on his

classroom experiences coupled with a researcher's objective, critical eye affords Allington credibility amongst educators. He reliably and consistently offers guiding principles of effective instruction aimed to improve the reading abilities of *all* students. He does so in a way that is accessible and that honours and uplifts his audience.

Uplift's emotional, spiritual, and collective social powers mean that it also has the power to improve people's performance and results. It makes individuals and organizations do better than they had before, helps them to outperform their opponents, and inspires them to succeed despite meager resources. Uplift enables people to take off and then stay aloft. The way they achieve this is through uplifting leadership. (Hargreaves, Boyle & Harris, 2014, p. 4)

I believe that if Allington's expertise was offered without his encouraging demeanour, his message would not resonate so strongly. Allington has been recognized as a researcher who empowers teachers and enables them to make informed decisions (Mallette & Barone, 2014, p. 6). Excellent teachers inspire students and colleagues to hone their abilities and encourage them to imagine their maximum potential: they are leaders who transform the way people think about themselves.

Allington's scholarship lends itself to the implementation of accessible instructional strategies grounded in solid research. His engaging, high interest writing style is well organized and rich with best-practice tools teachers can immediately apply to their lesson planning. Allington (2012) states that his goal "is to provide a readable, practical treatise on designing a more effective reading instruction" (p. 4).

What sets Allington apart from other literacy researchers? His legacy is propelled by his empowering, positive, and forward thinking approach, which has resulted in Allington being

lauded as someone whose work stands out because of his obvious respect and admiration for teachers (Mallette & Barone, 2014, p. 6). But what I believe makes Allington's work special is his understanding of the importance of connection with *his* students - in this case, the teachers he is teaching. Exemplary teachers intuitively understand the profound importance of bonding with their students in order to create an atmosphere optimal for learning. They understand how teacher-student connections constitute the heart of effective teaching. Allington writes for teachers as an honest but encouraging colleague: "U.S. schools, especially elementary schools, produce children who rank among the world's best readers. The schools are improving. More children are better readers than ever before, but there are still substantial challenges that need to be confronted" (Allington, 2012, p. 13). Though he acknowledges we all have work to do, he speaks to us as though we are working together to tackle the goal of getting *all* of our students reading:

The time has come to recognize that struggling readers still exist largely because of *us* [emphasis added]. If every school implemented the interventions that researchers have verified and if every teacher who is attempting to teach children to read developed the needed expertise, struggling readers would all learn to read and become achieving readers. However, it remains up to *us* [emphasis added], the educators, to alter our schools and our budgets so that every child becomes a real reader. I hope *we* [emphasis added] are up to the challenge. (Allington, 2013, p. 528)

Allington is never condescending to teachers in his writing. By demonstrating respect and admiration for teachers, Allington bridges distance between researcher and audience, and as such he draws teachers into his thinking, engaging them with descriptions of strategies that they understand and want to learn more about. According to a search query using Google Scholar

(2015), Allington's work has been cited in research more than 22,000 times, a powerful testimony to the importance of his life's work, and a reflection of the respect he garners from his peers in scholarly research. His advice, if applied to practice, will deliver results- and what exemplary teacher does not wish success for *all* of their students?

Allington's Philosophy of Reading Instruction

The significant number of times Allington has been cited reflects both the high quality and quantity of the work he has produced. He has written more than 150 published papers and reports, authored or co-authored 15 books, and served as past president of the International Reading Association (IRA). Allington's work is embedded in 21st century learning philosophy, grounded in the interactive theory of reading, and based on the whole language approach to literacy which promotes authentic reading experiences based on contextual reading instruction versus isolated skills instruction (DeWitt, 2013, p. 22). His research is consistent with the current model of differentiated instruction known as the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, which is designed to meet the needs of all learners and serves as a focal point in his extensive contributions to literacy research, is discussed in depth in Chapter 3. Perhaps the simplest way to define Allington's philosophy of reading instruction is by quoting him directly, "I believe every child is different and therefore each child is likely to require a unique approach when learning to read. Thus, classroom teachers must develop a wide range of expertise about reading instruction in order to serve every child well" (R. L. Allington, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

Allington (2002a) believes students need enormous quantities of successful reading to become independent, proficient readers. He also contends classroom teachers need to take accountability for all of their students, including (and perhaps more so) those who struggle with

reading. Other recurring themes in Allington's scholarship include the following: enhanced reading proficiency rests largely on the capacity of classroom teachers; classroom teachers need to provide expert, exemplary reading instruction responsive to students' needs; and administrators and school districts are responsible for providing instructional and curricular support, such as allotting funding for quality books for classrooms and professional development to encourage teachers to become experts (Allington, 2002a).

Situating Allington's Work in Reading Theories

To gain understanding and to contextualize the work of Allington, it is important to review the four commonly ascribed reading theories: bottom up (behaviourist), top-down (cognitive), interactive (constructivist) and transactional. Each theory has particular beliefs and explanations about the reading process.

The bottom up theory, grounded in the beliefs of behaviourists, became the standard teaching approach in the 1950's. This model of reading suggests reading occurs in a stage-by-stage manner, beginning with processing of graphic information ("bottom" of process) and moving sequentially to higher levels, or to the "top" of cognitive processing (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 159). In the bottom-up model of reading, letters are first identified, then sounds are attached to those letters, followed by word meaning, and finally, after all words are processed, the text meaning is understood (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Reading instruction through the teaching of a sequential phonics program is an example of pedagogy founded on this model. Gough (1972) and LaBerge and Samuels (1974) are examples of well-known researchers whose work is consistent with bottom-up models of reading (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Stanovich argued against the idea that reading processes must occur linearly in a series of discrete stages, stating that it is unnecessary for lower-level processes to be completed before

higher level processing can proceed (2000 as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 154).

Rumelhart identified flaws in the bottom-up model because it did not conceptually allow higher level thinking to influence lower level processing; we know from his observations that comprehension of text does assist with lower level functions such as word identification (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 160).

Conversely, the top down reading theory which gained popularity in the 1960s-1970s and reflected a shifting of paradigm from behaviourist approaches to cognitive theory, is built on the assumption that reading processes are constructed by what is in the reader's head more so than what is presented in text. The term 'top-down' is embedded in the heavy reliance on the reader's knowledge during reading processes. The top-down theory stresses the importance of background knowledge with proponents believing readers constantly use their knowledge to make predictions and hypotheses about upcoming text (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 162) and only sample texts to see if their predictions are correct. Goodman's (1967) psycholinguistic theory is the theoretical model of reading most closely aligned with a top-down model (as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 162). Stanovich (1980) explained that top-down models are termed as such because higher-level conceptual processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through lower-level processes: semantic processes direct lower level stimulus analysis and processes. An opponent of this theory, Stanovich (1980) maintains it is unlikely a hypothesis based on syntactic and semantic analyses can be formed in less than the few hundred milliseconds fluent readers require to recognize most words.

In late 1977 the interactive model was introduced by Rumelhart. The interactive theory of reading can be viewed as hybrid in nature as reading is explained as a non-linear combination of top down and bottom up processes simultaneously processing information (as cited in Tracey &

Morrow, 2012). Proponents of the interactive theory believe reading can neither be explained as strictly top-down or bottom-up processing but rather is a synthesis of information provided simultaneously from several knowledge sources such as orthographic knowledge, lexical knowledge, syntactic knowledge and so on (Stanovich, 1980). Interactive theorists believe each level of processing as not merely a data source for lower or higher levels of processing but a synthesis of stimulus based on analysis and constraints imposed by both higher and lower-level processes (Stanovich, 1980). According to Rumelhart, the interactive model accounts for instances where lower order processing affects higher order processing and vice versa (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Stanovich (1980) extended the interactive model by creating the interactive-compensatory model. Tracey and Morrow (2012) explain how Stanovich's model suggests compensatory processing is activated as needed during reading experiences: if one processor (e.g., orthographic), is not working well, another processor tries to compensate (e.g., syntactic). Critics of the interactive theory note how it does not give due consideration to the social context of the reading event.

Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (1978) also respects the role of the reader in the reading process. Rosenblatt applied the concept of Dewey's transaction to the reading process. She explained a transaction as an interchange between how readers understand text and their personal experiences, which then impacts their interpretation by virtue of life experiences, opinions and assumptions about the world (Karolides, 1999, p. 161). Rosenblatt (1986) postulated that reading is a transactional process that occurs between a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time and under particular circumstances (p. 123); in her theory, each individual reading experience is completely unique to each reader and each text that reader engages in. Rosenblatt (1982) explains that within the transactional theory readers will

decide early in the reading event which stance or “mental set” they will adopt: either efferent or aesthetic. She (1982) explains the efferent stance as being when the reader chooses to read for informational purposes with a focus on what is carried away at the end of reading, whereas readers embracing an aesthetic stance go inward during reading for the purpose of focusing on what is created during the reading event. Rosenblatt (1988) explains how the stances can fluctuate during the reading event and how several factors can affect the stance adopted by the reader. Concerns have been expressed over misinterpretation of Rosenblatt’s aesthetic stance by teachers and researchers (Lewis, 2000 as cited in Pantaleo 2013). Some scholars have criticized the transactional theory for its lack of specificity about which components shape responding as a social event (Beach, 2000; Dressman & Webster, 2001 as cited in Pantaleo 2013).

In reflecting on the reading theories, it is apparent that Allington’s work aligns with the interactive approach because he believes reading skills are best taught through the use of contextualized passages. Allington’s research consistently indicates effective reading instruction occurs when students are immersed in texts at their level of instruction. Allington does not advocate for skills-based instruction such as phonics or word lists (DeWitt, 2013). Allington explained how teachers embrace a whole language belief system differ from phonics-driven instructors in the frequency with which they engage children in different literacy tasks: students in phonics classrooms spent five times as much time on worksheets and twice as much time copying letters and words as students in whole language classrooms (DeWitt, 2013, p. 22). During his interview with DeWitt (2013) Allington noted how, “students in whole language classrooms spent more time dictating stories and using invented spelling to create personal narratives. Whole language teachers were more likely to engage children in whole class literacy activities” (p. 22). Teachers who practice whole language reading instruction are more successful

in developing emergent literacy proficiencies than those who hold a bottom-up, phonics belief system (DeWitt, 2013). Allington's advocating for and use of a contextualized approach to reading instruction aligns with the interactive theory as decoding and comprehension are believed to occur in a non-linear fashion, simultaneously processed by the reader. Rooted in the interactive theory, Allington's scholarship is rich in recommendations to assist in the development of reading ability for all students, and is particularly useful for educators looking for guidance of their most vulnerable students reading below grade level. In addition, Allington's research and beliefs include consideration of the social context of reading, both in the home and the classroom. Allington offers teachers many recommendations around reading and best practice instructional decision-making; though his primary audience is educators, his work also provides powerful guiding principles useful for parents who want to support their child's reading development at home.

Readers Who Struggle

Although there are countless avenues a teacher could pursue to improve practice, Allington centers educators back to literacy instruction, arguably the central tenet to all success in learning. School success relies heavily on literacy achievement. Though no longer the current pedagogical philosophy in teaching, Kindergarten to Grade 3 in the past was generally identified as the grades where students *learned to read* and in Grade 4 and onwards the focus switched to *reading to learn*. Though views on best practices in teaching reading have changed during the last decade, it is important to note that for much of Allington's career the context of teaching reading has been has focused on primary level. Allington advocates for primary-aged interventions so students who are struggling with reading can be supported before their view of school becomes framed by unsuccessful reading experiences, and the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986) takes over.

Allington advocates for early interventions for readers who struggle. According to Allington (2015a), children from low income families who are not reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3 are 13 times more likely to drop out of school; Allington (2015a) states school failure happens when students realize no one cares after being humiliated by being assigned texts that are too difficult and the effects of chronic failure take their toll. Allington noted in 1983 that readers who struggle are generally described as unmotivated, immature, distractible, and hyperactive: descriptions of behavioural displays that he compellingly notes are attributed solely to flaws in readers' characters (p. 549). Allington (2015b) points out the obvious: our beliefs about children tell us what we think they will achieve. He speculates instructional environments account for some, and perhaps most, of off-task behaviours and holds teachers accountable by saying instructional sequences offered are less engaging for students who struggle than those offered to better readers, and "this lower engagement during instruction decreases achievement and widens their deficit further" (Allington, 1983, p. 554).

Allington (2011) cites the work of Pearson and Heibert who found that children who are at risk of becoming struggling readers can be identified as early as Kindergarten. Indeed, research has shown the predictive validity of early literacy checkpoints to be powerful enough to identify learners who will struggle with reading later on. In the research conducted by Pearson and Heibert (2010 as cited in Allington, 2011) the one-third of kindergarten students who did not know all of the letter names were most likely to struggle with reading later on, "We could know on the second day of Kindergarten who is at risk of becoming a struggling reader, but we typically do nothing with the information" (Allington, 2011, p. 41). When questioned about proposed reviews of the British Columbia (B.C.) Kindergarten curriculum and achievement standards, Allington commented that most American students know two-thirds of their letters

upon entrance to Kindergarten; he added that if B.C. sets the standard at a meagre 20 letters known by Halloween then the province is, “working to fund a third world education outcome” (2015b). Allington has devoted much of his career to providing teachers with research-driven strategies designed to inform literacy instruction to best support reading development and based on that expertise has developed strong and informed opinions on what constitutes best practice.

Teacher accountability.

Allington (2011) shares a poignant finding identified by Pianta, Belsky, Houts, and Morrison (2007), who suggested a mere one-quarter of primary grade teachers are able and willing to teach students at-risk (p. 41). Accordingly, Allington (2011) stresses that more teachers need to improve their professional practice, as well as demonstrate willingness to work with all students rather than remaining deliberately ignorant about the struggles of Kindergarten students at-risk of reading failure (p. 42). He (2011) states that well-trained Kindergarten teachers are able to solve reading problems of readers at-risk at the same rate as expert tutorial programs. Research conducted by himself and others has led Allington (2011, 2015a) to conclude that investment in professional development for all Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers is a powerful strategy for improving reading achievement. According to Allington (2015a), teachers must be accountable for all students in their classrooms instead of putting the onus on specialist teachers to remediate reading difficulties in students who struggle. Powerful reading instruction is delivered within the context of the RTI framework as a collaborative process with *all* staff actively involved with *all* students. Though Allington’s books are written from an objective viewpoint, as a speaker he is candid and can stir emotions in his audience with his comments; at the Summit 7 conference in Kamloops, B.C., he was introduced as a researcher who is passionate about and gets furious when talking about literacy interventions (2015a).

Allington (2015a) garnered a buzz amongst educators attending the conference when he shared that data collected in a RTI study by Scanlan and Velluntino (1996) suggested pull-out intervention programs for learners who struggle allows classroom teachers to neglect to take adequate responsibility for all of their students' learning. He stated (2015a), "classroom teachers tend to believe that when those people [ESL teachers, literacy specialists, speech language pathologists] are available it becomes their problem and 'it's not my problem anymore: he gets his services from *her*.'" He (2015a) added that in the future specialist teachers may become obsolete and classroom teachers will have to take full responsibility for the education of every child.

After citing the work of Vellutino, Scanlon, Zhang, and Schatschneider (2008) on RTI and primary grade interventions, and the research by Scanlon et al. (2010) on RTI, Allington (2011) proposes that 98% of primary students who are at-risk would be performing at grade level if timely small group interventions consisting of three students or less were provided in addition to high quality literacy instruction in the regular classroom. Allington (2011, 2015a) contends that ensuring all students have access to high quality, intensive, and coherent reading lessons within the classroom would mean very few students would qualify as students who have learning disabilities or dyslexia; if needed, supplemental well co-ordinated interventions designed to complement classroom instruction could also be provided. At the Summit 7 conference, Allington (2015a) stated that more often than not it is the educators who are the problem and not the students. The power of effective reading instruction means the only students who will fail to meet grade level standards are those who do not attend school regularly and those with severe disabilities (Allington, 2012, p. 3). Allington undeniably challenges educators to reflect on their

own practice and honestly assess their teaching abilities when considering factors impacting student achievement.

Quality of instruction.

One of Allington's most notable contributions to literacy instruction culminated, after a decade of studying exemplary teachers, in an article featuring what Allington (2002a) coined as the "six T's" of effective instruction, a now a familiar term amongst educators. Allington's six T's constitute a summative framework of his views on effective instructional practices in developing reading (and writing) proficiency: time on texts, access to texts, quality teaching instruction, use of classroom talk, type of tasks assigned and assessment and evaluation practices which place less emphasis on testing and more emphasis on student effort. In accordance with Allington's belief that quality instruction is responsive to diverse learner needs, the six T's offer guiding principles rather than a pre-packaged script that teachers must follow. In terms of quality of instruction, Allington emphasizes the notion of active instruction, which he explains as the modeling and demonstration of useful strategies employed by good readers. Allington posits that much of what is considered teaching is actually simply assignment and assessment and explains that exemplary teachers model the thinking skilled readers engage in as they attempt to decode words, self-monitor for understanding, and summarize while reading. Accordingly, teachers must develop a repertoire of strategies in order to support and develop each child's unique learning needs.

Becoming an exemplary literacy teacher requires the ability to be responsive to learner needs because "exemplary teaching is not regurgitation of a common script but is responsive to children's needs" (Allington, 2002a, p. 747). Allington (2013) states that every effective primary-grade teacher should be capable of adapting their teaching for their students so they

have several decoding approaches in their repertoire which affords teachers with the flexibility to identify the best strategy for each child, knowing that no single approach will work for every student (p. 522). Research findings have shown that professional development for Kindergarten teachers has proven successful in helping them work effectively with readers at-risk (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi & Brooks, 1999; Scanlon et al., 2010 as cited in Allington, 2011). Children need effective teachers who thoughtfully plan and deliver high quality literacy lessons and who are willing to work with students who are at-risk of not developing proficient reading ability. Allington (2013) emphasizes that, “we have too much evidence that expertise in reading matters for any child who is struggling while learning to be literate” (p. 524). He (2011) points out, however, that in many American school districts neither high-quality, extensive professional development for Kindergarten teachers nor expert tutorial instruction for Kindergarten students at-risk is on the agenda and boldly contends that because of these policy decisions schools are deliberately creating pools of readers who will inevitably struggle (p. 42). At the Summit 7 conference Allington commented on American Reading First programs and the ineffectiveness and corruption of the entrepreneurial sort that emerged from federal reading policies (Garan, 2005 as cited in Allington, 2013, 2015a). Allington (2015a) remarked that in B.C. we are fortunate to not have federal mandates on what we should be doing to improve education: mandates in the U.S. that he assesses as being simply wrong. Allington challenges educators to reflect on their own practices and skillset before blaming students who struggle for difficulties with learning. Allington (2012) comments that far too often the nature of comprehension difficulties experienced by readers who struggle is attributed to a supposed weaknesses of ability in readers when the true source of difficulty is inherent in the quality of instruction they have

been provided (p. 134). Allington (2002a) questions why it has taken so long for the education industry to understand what other industries have long since recognized: that expertise matters.

Allington (2012, 2015a) stresses the importance of thoughtful instructional planning that offers compatibility between programs, and includes communication between classroom and specialist teachers, in order to avoid the issue of ‘planned fragmentation.’ Allington maintains that in order to ensure curriculum coherence, effective interventions need to be designed around what is going on in the classroom so learners are best supported and not missing key instruction in the classroom context. He (2007) refers to the work of Mathes et al. (2005) as evidence that when supplemental reading instruction is paired with appropriate classroom lessons better gains are produced.

Instructional decision-making.

Allington contends that research-driven data should guide instructional decision making. Teachers too commonly continue to erroneously teach skills in isolation, based on the belief that specific skill deficits impact bottom-up processing, when research overwhelmingly indicates literacy lessons in the context of authentic, meaning-focused reading experiences prove superior in providing gains in learning (Allington, 2013, pp. 526-527). Over 30 years ago, Allington (1983) wrote about changing the instructional environment offered to readers who struggle so that it better approximates the environment offered to good readers in order to improve the potential for reading development. A study which explored effective first grade literacy instruction conducted by Allington and his colleagues (Pressley et al., 2001) revealed the complexity of effective instruction. The researchers identified the following characteristics as typical of effective teachers and instructional settings: excellent classroom management; positive, reinforcing, cooperative environments; a balance of skills instruction and whole

language; acceleration of demands that match student competence and effective scaffolding of instruction; encouragement of self-regulation; and strong connections across the curriculum (Pressley et al., 2001, pp. 45-48).

In addition to exploring characteristics of effective teachers and instructional settings, Allington has also spent considerable time exploring the constituents of *thoughtful* literacy conversations and how to foster the development of meaningful classroom discussions about text. He notes that too often students who struggle are asked low-level questions after they have finished reading, something Allington declares is a widespread instructional practice despite the lack of research to support such pedagogy; moreover, he postulates such ineffective questioning may in fact undermine literacy development (Allington, 2014). Engaging in literate conversations fosters comprehension; however, Allington (2014) remarks that too often comprehension revolves around interrogations about trivial details instead of responses to higher-order questions. Allington contends that teachers need to develop expertise in initiating and managing classroom discussions and recommends they develop students' ability to engage with one another as conversational partners; he suggests the instructional technique of turn-pair-share to build this skill. Allington (2002a) suggests sustained reading activity can be increased by crafting supportive conversational environments where students talk to peers and teachers. Allington (2012) explains thoughtful literacy is distinguished by demonstrating thinking and understanding of text rather than ability to recall facts (p. 129). After studying the practices of exemplary fourth-grade teachers, Allington and his colleagues Johnston and Day (2002) concluded that the nature of classroom talk- even instructional talk- should be conversational in nature; teachers need to engage students in discussions of their understandings, responses, and

puzzlements and encourage students to engage each other's ideas, hence keeping authority more distributed rather than centralized (Allington et al., 2002).

Additionally, Allington and Gabriel (2012) identified another important instructional practice- providing fluent adult models. They identified listening to an adult model fluent reading as a high-impact, low-input strategy that is underused in classrooms but one that can support readers and simply requires the decision to use class time more effectively; they describe reading aloud to students as low-input because it does not require special materials or training. As Allington (1983) has argued for decades, the difference between good and poor readers can be attributed as much to differences in instruction as variations in individual learning styles or aptitudes.

Paraprofessionals.

A chief concern by Allington evident throughout his work (2007, 2011, 2015a) is the need for classroom teachers to take ownership of all students in their classroom and not rely on outsourcing students with reading difficulties to specialist teachers or paraprofessionals to work with. Allington argues that expert instruction designed to accelerate reading growth needs to be delivered by the classroom teacher because Educational Assistant/ Special Education Assistants (EA/SEAs) do not offer the same quality of instruction as a professional teacher. Allington's opinion is based on previous research (Boyd-Zaharias & Pate-Bain, 1998; Gerber, Finn, Achilles & Boyd-Zararias, 2001; Rowan & Guthrie, 1989 as cited in Allington, 2011). He (2011) believes:

schools probably waste more money on employing paraprofessionals in the primary grades than on any other expenditure. I say waste because a long history of education research

demonstrates that although paraprofessionals certainly do provide some benefits, they don't provide high quality reading lessons to struggling readers. (p. 42)

Allington (2011) explains that research shows EA/SEA support never accelerates reading progress enough to remove the struggling reader label and though their assistance may add two months of gains, readers who struggle typically need 10-15 months of additional growth to be reading on level with peers. Allington et al. cite the work of Ehri and her colleagues (2007) to support their perspective: Allington et al. (2015) found certified teachers produced greater gains than paraprofessionals and speculated this may be because teachers were better equipped to select appropriate texts or used superior instructional techniques. According to Allington (2013) when readers who struggle work with paraprofessionals they are typically being paired with the least expert adults in the school (p. 523). Despite what research shows, Allington (2011) points out that currently paraprofessionals far outnumber available literacy specialists and that the high-quality lessons readers who struggle desperately need will rarely be delivered until schools employ multiple specialists with graduate degrees with emphasis on reading instruction (pp. 523-524). He urges educators to acknowledge students at-risk need more expert reading instruction than they have been receiving.

Importance of suitable text selections.

Selecting texts beyond the instructional level, that is, texts students read with less than 98% accuracy, is another contributing factor identified by Allington that prevents students from achieving growth in reading ability. Despite speculation by that school reading texts have trended downward in difficulty (Chall, 1977; Gamson, Lu & Eckert, 2013; Hayes, Wolfer & Wolfe, 1996 as cited in Allington et al., 2015), Allington et al. (2015) provide evidence to the contrary: between Grades 1-3 texts used today are significantly more complex than in the past (p.

492). Allington's (2007) remarkably simple advice is to provide students with books they can read accurately, fluently, and with strong comprehension (p. 8). Effective lessons must be designed through selecting texts with appropriate levels of difficulty otherwise little to no benefit for the learner will ensue. Allington (2002a) logically points out that no child who spends 80% of their instructional time with inappropriately leveled text will make much progress academically. Seventy years of evidence confirmed time and time again that children are more likely to learn to read and to learn content when the text can be read with a high level of accuracy and comprehension (Allington et al., 2015). Allington and Gabriel (2012) emphasize how the traditional instructional practice of providing a steady diet of too-challenging texts to readers who struggle serves to only widen the gap between readers. Appropriate text selection relates to allocation of resources because schools need a plentiful supply of levelled texts so that classroom instruction and interventions can be linked to grade-level curriculum goals and the responsibility of locating appropriate texts does not fall singularly on specialist teachers (Allington, 2007). Allington and Johnston (2002) found the most effective teachers routinely create "multi-sourced, multi-level" curriculum plans to ensure readers who struggle are provided with books they are able to successfully read (as cited in Allington 2007, p. 9). Allington (2007) explains that readers who struggle thrive in differentiated classrooms because meeting student needs is designed as an all-day-long affair rather than one-size-fits-all curriculum delivery.

Appropriate student-text matches facilitate motivating students to engage in independent reading, therefore encouraging self-teaching to occur. The self-teaching hypothesis, a term coined by Share and Stanovich (1995 as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen et al., 2010) proposes that each successful experience decoding an unfamiliar word provides students with the opportunity to acquire word-specific orthographic information which then influences reading

automaticity and fluency, and less directly, comprehension and general reading development (Allington & McGill-Franzen et al., 2010, p. 424). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) connect the strategy of increasing access to text to the self-teaching theory by explaining that development of reading proficiency requires repeated successful exposures to letter patterns so beginning readers develop rapid, flexible word-identification skills and strategies (p. 71). Furthermore, text-reader compatibility can positively impact vocabulary building, reading accuracy, background knowledge, and develop understandings of complex written-language syntax and story/text grammar (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003, p. 71). Accordingly, for self-teaching to transpire, students must engage with texts at their instructional level of accuracy; students who read texts at their instructional reading level outperform students who read texts above their instructional level (Allington et al., 2015, p. 495). Allington (2013) cites the findings of Stahl and Nagy (2006) in emphasizing that vocabulary knowledge is largely a product of independent engaged reading and furthers that notion by adding there is evidence that skills ranging from phonemic awareness, to phonics and comprehension, are developed through independent reading and writing (pp. 525-526). Independent reading fosters vocabulary acquisition more so than vocabulary lessons (Allington et al., 2015, p. 495). Self-correction, an important self-regulating strategy that good readers develop early on, is also an essential aspect of the self-teaching hypothesis (Allington et al., 2015, p. 496). Allington (2013) patiently conveys time and time again in his research, “If we want to foster reading development, then we must design lessons that provide opportunities for struggling readers to actually read”; however, he notes American students who struggle with reading do far less reading than good readers do (p. 526). Moreover, if texts are too difficult, self-teaching is suppressed (Allington et al., 2015, p. 496).

Substantive reading growth is facilitated when appropriately difficult texts are used in instruction (O'Connor et al., 2002 as cited in Allington 2007, p. 8) as well as in interventions. Allington advocates for all-day-long intervention design with emphasis on reader-text match, "We need to reconceptualise intervention for struggling readers as something that must occur all day long. Intervention cannot just consist of those few minutes working with a reading specialist" (Allington, 2007, p. 13). As Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, and Gross (2007) found in their research, a powerfully effective instructional method that enables readers who struggle to make improvement is to give them reading materials where they will experience a high level of success: texts they can read with an accuracy level between 98% and 100% (as cited in Allington, 2013, p. 524). Allington's advice about appropriate reader-text matches follows in the footsteps of Adams (1990) whose research findings indicated improvement in reading is situated on the ability to read independently with appropriate text; otherwise children will learn and comprehend too little and tire too quickly (as cited in Allington 2013, p. 525). All children need to develop stamina for reading and acquire the ability to read for at least 30 minutes independently (Allington, 2012, p. 61). Allington (2013) believes that readers who struggle participate in too little high-success reading activity every day and points to this mismatch between text and ability as the one reason so few readers who struggle ever become achieving readers (p. 525). Allington (2012) makes the point that if students are given only text that can be read in 10 minutes they will never develop the stamina needed to develop into proficient readers (p. 61). Allington (2002b) puts text-reader matches in perspective with the following explanation:

Adults won't read hard texts voluntarily - not because we lack character, but because we've had too many frustrating experiences trying to learn from texts that were simply too

difficult, had too many unfamiliar words, and had complicated sentences that seemed purposely tangled in an attempt to frustrate us. (p. 18)

Allington (2002a) states that motivation for reading is dramatically influenced by reading success. Allington and Gabriel (2012) note how when readers are struggling with too hard text they are less likely to understand and therefore enjoy what they read and are more likely to become frustrated and lose confidence in their abilities.

Ineffective instructional programs and strategies.

In Allington's (2011) opinion, school districts do not lack the funds needed to buy quality instructional materials, rather where they go wrong is that they spend money on approaches that do not work. Allington and Gabriel (2012) suggest that school principals eliminate budgets for workbooks and worksheets and spend money on real books for classroom libraries if they want to improve students' opportunities to become better readers. Moreover, Allington (2002a) believes the most "research-based" strategy available in investing in education lies in sound hiring decisions made by school districts alongside professional development.

Allington (2011) further maintains that computer-based instructional programs are an expensive strategy that he terms as 'nonsolutions' to fostering reading development; he points out that only *one* of 150-plus commercial computer-based reading programs reviewed for the [American] federal *What Works Clearinghouse* (WWC) website generated a "strong evidence" rating (p. 42). Allington (2013) states that despite the fact that computer-based reading programs have been this decade's most popular educational fad, he recommends eliminating expenditures of education dollars for computers-based reading curriculum.

Allington (2011, 2012, 2013) refers to WWC to verify that not a single core reading program had even one study supporting its use. Allington (2013) notes the flaws of maintaining

fidelity to core reading programs which have never been proven to provide effective teaching programs but which have been embraced by many American schools, particularly those serving low SES children (p. 523). Allington believes the use of commercial core reading programs serves as an example of entrepreneurial influences on teaching children to read. He (2013) contends that the fixation on core reading programs does not serve students who struggle, and cites research by Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2009) that indicated how these programs do not provide the same amount of guided practice as is recommended in research, do not consistently follow the gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) model researchers have developed, do not consistently provide explicit instruction, and do not have teachers relate strategies to one another making their impact on reading clear to students. Allington (2011) explains few comprehension skill or strategy lessons in core programs last for more than one week, which is insufficient time to foster growth in abilities (pp. 42-43). Moreover, 20 years ago Allington and Weber (1993) noted how 98% of questions offered in commercial reading series were low-level and literal in nature and cites more recent research by Dewitz et al. (2009) that reveals this proportion seems to be holding true in current core reading programs (as cited in Allington, 2014). According to Allington (2011) core reading programs fail for three reasons: they require little actual reading, they do not promote high-success reading, and they do not offer self-selected reading. Given Allington's extensive work in this area it is evident why he would not support the use of these programs: "no research existed then, or exists now, to suggest that maintaining fidelity to a core reading program will provide effective reading lessons" (2013, p. 523).

Allington recognizes schools are trying to address reading issues and suggests money is ineffectively allocated to remediating the problem; instead of core reading programs, computer-

based instructional programs, or EA/SEA assistance, Allington (2011) cites Ehri, et al., (2007) in concluding that these students need to work with *teachers* in order to make accelerated progress in reading (p. 43). Allington (2012) states it is rare for children to meet current definitions of learning disabled or dyslexia and believes that:

a large number of children become labelled as learning disabled... by and large this is not a result of having too little money to address these problems; it is more simply that most schools spend the money they have on lots of things that have never been supported by the research. (p. 30)

Citing other researchers to support his views (Mathes et al., 2005, p. 44), Allington (2011) contends that learners at-risk are unlikely to receive expert interventions and as such are guaranteed a fate of struggling with reading.

As described above, Allington's six T's provide teachers with effective guiding principles for instruction; however, he states the design of reading lessons is different for strong versus poor readers in that readers who are stronger get assigned more reading activity and students who struggle are given more isolated skill instruction (Allington, 1980, 1983; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Collins, 1986; Cummins, 2007; Vali & Chambliss 2007; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003 as cited in Allington 2013). Allington (2014) cautions against many educators' current fascination with oral reading speed as it has resulted in students who can read aloud faster and more accurately but who do not demonstrate improvements in silent reading comprehension. While silent reading is the most common reading activity for better readers, those who struggle are more commonly made to read orally (Allington, 1983); "our [educators'] goal, however, is to create children who can read silently and understand the text" (Allington et al., 2015, p. 493). Allington (2013) is also critical of round robin reading as a lesson component

because only one child gets to read while the others are at best following along; during silent reading everyone is engaged so they read three to five times as much text as they do during a round robin reading event (pp. 526-527). Furthermore, Allington (2009, 2013) contends round robin reading is ineffective not only because reading volume is decreased but also because it allows for far more teacher interruptions which results in readers reading slower and more tentatively - something Allington argues fosters dysfluent reading behaviour typically seen in readers who struggle.

Teacher interruption behaviour is a topic Allington (1980) has given due attention to since conducting a study in the early 1980's that revealed how teachers are more likely to interrupt readers who struggle than those who do not. Allington's (2014) more recent research continues to corroborate and add to his earlier findings: teachers typically interrupt readers who struggle immediately, even before the student has attempted to pronounce the whole word causing them difficulty. Allington notes that teachers wait longer before interrupting readers with better proficiency, usually waiting until the end of the sentence or even the end of the page. He has found teachers tend to focus on surface-level features when interrupting to correct errors, whereas they encourage self-monitoring in the stronger readers. Allington believes teacher interruption behaviours inevitably create two types of readers: readers who self-regulate and readers who struggle, stopping after almost every word to look at their teacher for cues; these differences are caused by variations in where teachers direct student attention. Predictably, Allington notes how strong readers learn to pay attention to whether the text makes sense while readers who struggle learn to focus on letters and sounds. Again, Allington's (2002a) position that reading proficiency rests on the capacity of the classroom teacher to provide expert instruction is maintained throughout his scholarship.

Concluding Thoughts About Allington's Scholarship on Readers Who Struggle

As Allington (2013) notes, it takes *50 years* for research to permeate into the actual teaching practice; sadly, though we know that high quality instruction has an undoubtable direct impact on a child's acquisition of skills, Stuhlman and Pianta (2009) found only 23% of Grade 1 teachers provided the type of high-quality reading lessons that might enable all learners to leave first grade a successful reader (as cited in Allington 2013, p. 524). As daunting as it may sound, Allington (2013) contends that committed teachers who want to offer quality literacy education to their students can improve their personal practice with a mere 30+ hours of targeted, high quality professional development and become "truly effective" reading teachers (p. 524). Accordingly, Allington (2002a) advocates for policy design crafted to ensure more effective teachers are created each year in their schools.

It is easy to despair about the unequal literacy experiences that separate children upon entrance to Kindergarten. Blame can be externalized to parents and students rather than teachers acknowledging and accepting each child's journey to reading success begins at a different place. Research has revealed that some students enter school with a language difference of millions of words; others enter school fully prepared for school with the desired 1,000 book experiences behind them (DeWitt, 2013, pp. 21-23). Exemplary teachers take their students from whatever point they arrive at and move them forward to the best of their ability. It is with skilled instruction that students will rise to the standards set for them, and according to Allington (2013) "all students' reading progress depends mainly on the teachers they get" (as cited in DeWitt, 2013, p. 23).

Allington's scholarship on how to support readers who struggle offers educators research-driven guiding principles to support instruction. As well, reviewing Allington's research around

supporting reading progress offers educators the opportunity to reflect on what they are already doing well and avenues they could continue to improve upon. In Chapter 3 I examine Allington's work around summer reading setback before looking at his work on RTI.

Chapter 3

Summer Reading Loss and Response to Intervention (RTI)

In the past decade Allington's work on supporting readers who struggle has evolved to an increasingly holistic view that includes research around summer reading loss and current RTI methodologies implemented in American and Canadian schools in an attempt to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of all learners in schools. As described in Chapter 2, as well as Allington's work being situated in whole language and interactive theory of reading, he also considers sociocultural factors that impact the development of reading ability. Allington's scholarship includes attention to sociocultural aspects such as teacher expertise, differentiated instruction strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, access to books, as well as acknowledgement of home factors that affect students' development.

In Chapter 3 I focus on the topic of summer reading and specifically on Allington's edited book *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/ Poor Reading Achievement Gap* (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). I discuss the research base around summer reading, factors that contribute to summer setback, and conclude with Allington's innovative recommendations for addressing summer reading loss. Following the section on summer reading I consider another title in Allington's *What Really Matters* series: *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (2009). I make connections between his work on summer reading, RTI, and readers who struggle. I describe Allington's work on RTI and how teachers can respond to diverse student needs in a fair, effective, and timely manner within the intervention model. I also discuss Allington's observations of Tier 1 core curriculum supports: the research-driven, differentiated instructional best practices that form the foundation of effective teaching for all students and include regular screening procedures to ensure learners at-risk are identified. For students who do not make

adequate progress under Tier 1 instructional supports, Allington's recommendations for increasingly intensive Tier 2 small group interventions as well as 1:1 individualized Tier 3 interventions for students who require intensive remedial instruction are examined. I conclude Chapter 3 by summarizing Allington's recommendations for facilitating reading development, and by providing a brief critique of his scholarship.

Summer Reading Loss

Allington (2010) acknowledges that poor children have never fared as well as more advantaged children in American schools, pointing out the achievement gap between more and less economically advantaged students has remained unchanged for almost 20 years (as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). Working alongside other researchers, Allington and McGill-Franzen edited the book *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/ Poor Reading Achievement Gap* (2013), and co-wrote four of the seven chapters. The following sections of this chapter encompass research Allington co-produced with others around the topic of summer reading loss. Summer reading setback is a salient topic in literacy instruction that Allington and his colleagues (2013) describe as the backsliding in reading development that can occur during summer vacation periods when children are not enrolled in school. Allington et al. (2010) state that increased reading activity during summer months may slow or reverse summer reading setback (p. 424). In addition, Allington et al. (2010) contend that while previous researchers established summer reading setback does indeed exist, those findings did not result in due attention being given to remediating the primary source of the existing achievement gap: differences in the economic backgrounds of children. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) caution against bemoaning the rich/poor reading achievement gap while continuing to ignore research and doing nothing to productively narrow the gap: simply providing books that match reading levels and

interests can largely eliminate summer reading loss and effectively narrow the rich-poor reading achievement gap (p. 110).

Research base.

Allington et al.'s (2010) work on summer reading setback builds on a research base that has been formed over more than three decades. Research by Heynes and Grether (1983), which examined 600 New York City elementary schools, looked at fall-to-spring reading achievement data and concluded students in both high-poverty and low poverty schools made substantially similar gains when school was in session (as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003). Allington et al. make reference to the "faucet theory," developed by Entwisle, Alexander and Olsen (2001 as cited in Allington et al., 2010), which contends that when the school faucet is turned on (in session), children of every economic background benefit almost equally but during summer months reading proficiency among more economically advantaged children continues to develop whereas no similar growth is observed in economically disadvantaged children (p. 413). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) cite another finding from the study by Heynes and Grether (1983) which showed that differential progress made during four summers between Grades 2-6 accounted for upwards of 80% of the achievement difference between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Since the phenomena of summer reading loss was first identified, Harris Cooper et al. (1996 as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 13 empirical studies involving 40,000 subjects and concluded summer vacations resulted in an annual achievement gap of about three months between rich and poor students which can accumulate to a year and a half lag between the end of Kindergarten and the end of Grade 5. As described below, Allington and his colleagues have contributed to the existing research base on summer reading loss. They have experimented with a book fair intervention,

examined the effectiveness of interventions done by other researchers, and suggested recommendations to focus professional attention on the issue of summer reading setback.

Factors contributing to summer reading setback.

Researchers have established poverty as one factor that can impact reading achievement. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) note how reading may be less common in summer months amongst children from impoverished homes because access to school libraries and classroom reading materials is limited. Secondly, schools serving large numbers of poor children tend to have smaller, older, and less extensive classroom and school libraries (Allington & McGill-Franzen). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) reference research by Susan Neuman and Donna Celano (2001) which indicated that access to books via availability of bookstores within communities as well as libraries beyond the school setting varied widely depending on the economic status of the community at large.

Although family socioeconomic status is highly correlated to reading achievement it is just one of many contributing factors that impact the achievement gap between children from rich versus poor homes (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013, p.12). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) point out that not every child living in poverty experiences summer reading loss and that academic performance and its effects on a child's sense of self-efficacy also have an impact (p. 11). Successful school reading experiences are linked with motivation to read voluntarily (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). While the issue of summer reading setback is comprised of many variables, Allington et al. endorse the findings of Heyns (1978 as cited in Allington et al., 2010) by emphasizing the necessity of children having enormous quantities of successful reading experiences, both in and out of the school setting, as the best strategy to creating proficient, independent readers.

Allington et al. (2010) investigated the phenomena of summer reading setback by conducting a longitudinal study consisting of 852 students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, in 17 randomly selected high-poverty schools. Over a three year distribution period, students in Grades 1 and 2 at the onset of the study self-selected trade books on the final day of school, while a control group consisting of 478 randomly selected students from those same schools received no books. Differential access to books has been offered by past researchers as one explanation of reading achievement between more and less advantaged students (Constantino, 2005; McGill-Franzen et al., 2002; Neuman, 1986; Neuman & Celano, 2001 as cited in Allington et al., 2010); Allington and colleagues hypothesized that providing the students with *self-selected* books would increase their inclination to engage in voluntary summer reading, therefore helping to close the achievement gap. Aligning naturally with Allington's well documented stance that students who struggle with reading need to increase their reading volume, data from the longitudinal study corroborated his position that "providing easy access to self-selected books for summer reading over successive years does, in fact, limit summer reading setback" (Allington et al., 2010, p. 422). Allington and his colleagues found students in the experimental treatment group who received books for three consecutive summers engaged more often in voluntary summer reading and therefore had much higher reading achievement than the control group (2010, p. 422). Moreover, the research findings indicated reading gains were larger amongst the most economically disadvantaged families and the researchers theorized that this result may be because those students had the most restricted access to books in the past.

Aligning with Allington's work on readers who struggle, he again references the self-teaching hypothesis and notes it is a powerful concept that has been largely overlooked in the development of reading ability (2011, 2013). Allington et al. (2003, 2010) identify self-teaching

as one reason why voluntary reading done during the summer or anytime can help to enhance reading development. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) connect the strategy of increasing access to self-selected text to Share and Stanovich's self-teaching hypothesis (1995), which was explained in Chapter 2, by rationalizing that allowing children to self-select books will entice them to read more extensively, thereby fostering conditions for self-teaching to occur. In sum, Allington et al.'s (2010) study provided evidence that easy and continuing access to self-selected books is a strategy for addressing summer reading setback.

Recommendations for addressing summer reading loss.

While traditional school reforms aimed at improving reading achievement have almost unilaterally focused on curriculum and instructional improvements that can occur only during the parameters of the school year, Allington et al. (2013) have attempted to shift professional attention by developing recommendations and interventions designed to occur during the summertime. Reiterating concerns voiced by Doris Entwisle and colleagues (1997), Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) caution that proposals for mandating summer school attendance as a means of addressing summer setback are neither cost-effective nor ethical; they explain forcing students from low-income families to attend summer school presents a potentially discriminatory policy framework. Furthermore, providing approximately a dozen free books to primary-grade children each summer and half a dozen to older elementary aged students achieves the same results in reading achievement as summer school attendance (Allington, 2012, p. 28). Accordingly, more innovative interventions and recommendations form the basis of Allington et al.'s (2013) approach to addressing summer setback.

In *Summer Reading* Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) offer two broad research-guided reform principles to steer educational efforts. The first principle they suggest is centered on the

importance of *volume* of reading; they clarify that *volume* differs from *time* allotted to reading because, as they explain, a 90 minute reading block all too often results in a mere ten minutes of reading while the other 80 minutes gets used on other work tasks. They maintain reform designs must enhance voluntary reading in evenings, weekends, and during summer holidays. The second reform principle emphasizes children must have fingertip access to books they find engaging and that offer opportunities for successful reading experiences throughout the calendar year so that reading in volume occurs. Reform designs should include classroom book collections containing hundreds of titles of appropriately difficult texts so that all students, regardless of achievement levels, have easy access to accessible text matching their reading level and available year round. Beyond these two broad reform principles, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) state that instruction within schools must be delivered by expert teachers who consistently make visible internal reading processes to ensure students understand how proficient readers think before, during, and after reading (p. 14). They explain explicit instruction ensures that when children engage in independent reading over the holidays they are able to consolidate the skills taught. Allington and McGill-Franzen further suggest schools consider loaning classroom or library books out or even opening the school library once a week during summer to facilitate book exchanges.

While Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) reassure educators that simply increasing access to books matched to development levels will produce reading growth and eliminate summer reading loss (p. 39), they also maintain teachers must be adept at matching students to appropriately levelled texts so they can successfully engage in voluntary reading. They caution that too often teachers pair students with instructional level text when they need independent level texts; that is, books that Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) describe as being read with

99% accuracy with appropriate phrasing and expression. Allington and his colleagues (2013) have found readers who struggle most often select texts they cannot read accurately, sometimes due to selecting books without actually sampling them; they state that children who struggle with reading tend not to be skilled at selecting appropriate texts independently and require guidance.

Despite the need for appropriately levelled text-reader matches, when Allington et al. (2010) conducted a series of book fairs during their study of the 17 high-poverty schools around the topic of summer reading, they aimed to supply independent level books for students to self-select from but still allowed students to make their own choices with minimal guidance unless it was sought after (they found it usually was), drawing on research evidence that free choice is a powerful motivator. They found that providing access to summer books with choice produced effects on reading achievement almost twice as large as access to books without choice (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) suggested the book fair intervention could be improved by providing students of all ages and ability levels, but particularly those who struggle with reading, with guidelines for book selections (p. 105). Their guidelines include having the student look at the back cover, read it to see if it is of interest, and if it is to open the book to any page and read it; if the page contains more than two words the student is unable to read they will likely find it too difficult and may never finish it so they should repeat the aforementioned process until they find a book they can and want to read. Allington and McGill-Franzen suggest a teacher may also model their own self-selection of a book using a think aloud to further illustrate the process.

While encouraging self-selection as a strategy was successful, they found reading logs were less so; most students did not complete their reading logs, however, the ones who did exhibited substantially larger gains (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). Predictably, students whose

parents were involved in their summer reading also reaped benefits. Because their study was longitudinal in nature, examining reading development over three years, and the children were in the early primary grades at the study's onset, Allington and his colleagues supplied approximately 15 books per child to ensure an adequate summer supply considering the students were not yet reading chapter books. Still, Allington and his fellow researchers estimated the total cost for each child was approximately \$50 per year and maintain it was a cost-effective intervention when considering administrators often invest much more in ineffective computer-based interventions, commercial reading programs, and workbooks in an attempt to improve reading scores (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013, p. 48).

Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) also support the use of other innovative interventions explored by colleagues in literacy research. They refer to the interventions by Malach and Rutter (2003 as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013) who studied the effectiveness of an RV turned mobile tutoring centre where teachers offered 1:1 or small group lessons to children who visited as well as offering a book exchange service. Additionally, consistent with Allington's work on summer reading loss and found to provide positive results, Allington and McGill-Franzen suggested educators consider Willman's (1999 as cited in Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013) work where she had children call her school voicemail and read to her or summarized a chapter of a book they read. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) discuss other innovative summer interventions such as summer reading programs that target increasing reading volume, summer reading clubs, as well as reading events and programs organized by public libraries (pp. 100-101).

Concluding thoughts on summer reading loss.

As Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003) point out, the summer vacation period corresponds to roughly one-third of an academic year; they meaningfully demonstrate how critically important those months are by suggesting that educators imagine how negatively children's reading development would be affected if virtually nothing was read during the first three months of the school year. Heeding Allington et al.'s (2013) advice by following research-driven recommendations and implementing suggested interventions could at minimum maintain student reading achievement during summer months and at best allow the summer months to propel reading achievement upward, which would then impact student success throughout the school year. In reflecting on research around summer reading, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) stated that in eliminating summer reading loss and instead producing small reading achievement gains, the studies indicate poor children's achievement improved by about six months every summer:

such [reading] loss can be stemmed, and stemmed with only a modest investment by school districts, basically by providing free books of appropriate difficulty and linked to student interests for summer reading... all school districts could provide much assistance to encourage self-selected summer voluntary reading. But few school districts currently provide any of the options researchers have explored. (pp. 52-53)

The deficit created by a three month annual achievement gap that accumulates to a nearly a year and a half lag in reading achievement from the beginning of Grade 1 to the end of Grade 6, combined with an initial achievement gap already existing at the onset of lower-income students' schooling career, can mean students often remain two or three years behind more advantaged peers by the time they enter Grade 7, even with effective instruction during the school year

(Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013, p. 5). Supporting reading progress during the summer months ultimately allows educators to create conditions of success for both students and themselves: the alternative is playing an unending game of catch-up, a common scenario that often characterizes the schooling experience for readers who struggle as well as their teachers.

Introduction: Response to Intervention (RTI)

From in the beginning of *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (2009) Allington focuses on supporting readers who struggle, beginning with the statement that he would prefer the acronym RTI stood for response to *instruction*. He (2009) explains his preference is rooted in the fact that improving access to expert, intensive reading instruction is what might make the RTI framework different from past initiatives (p. v). Allington (2009) describes RTI as a general education initiative and as such the RTI framework is designed to supplement quality classroom instruction, not replace it (p. 21). Those individuals who are familiar with Allington's scholarship will recognize how his RTI work closely corresponds with his position on readers who struggle: Allington (2009) explains the basic premise of RTI is that all students, especially readers who struggle, will be provided appropriate classroom and intervention reading instruction (p. 22). According to Allington (2009), only after such services have been provided and appropriately documented should the process of consideration for special education services begin (p. 22). Schools must demonstrate reading difficulties are not manifesting due to a lack of appropriate reading instruction.

Allington (2009) explains the goal of RTI is to reduce the number of students referred for special education services (p. 22), and states that only after appropriately intense and expert reading instruction is provided should a school consider a referral to special education as the last step in the RTI process (p. 25). Allington (2009) cites Lyon et al. (2001) who explain that the

intent of RTI is to reduce the number of students labelled as having disabilities by as much as 70% (p. 19). In Allington's (2009) opinion, too many students are classified as having learning disabilities without ever having participated in any early intervention; he cites research that has documented how readers who have struggled have caught up to grade level after receiving intensive early interventions (p. 19). To best position readers for success and accomplish the goal of resolving reading difficulties, RTI initiatives should be designed around core research-based design principles (Allington, 2009, p. 25).

RTI model.

The RTI framework is represented as a triangle with three tiers of support indicating an increase in intensity of interventions. The bottom tier of the triangle, Tier 1, represents universal classroom interventions that are preventative and proactive; 75-80% of student needs are met within this broad band. A significantly smaller proportion of students, 10-15% will require Tier 2 interventions, identified by school based teams after classroom-wide Tier 1 supports prove insufficient. A very small percentage of students, 5- 10%, will require intensive, individualized Tier 3 interventions. The RTI model is designed to emphasize quality educational practices for all students and to provide a continuum of support for students who require additional intervention.

The RTI initiative offers hope that readers who struggle may get enough reading instruction to double or triple their rate of reading development and acquisition, a factor Allington (2009) identifies as the reason why previous federal education initiatives have failed to close achievement gaps (p. v). Similar to Allington's research on readers who struggle, his work on RTI is embedded in the belief that early interventions are cost-effective and powerful. Allington (2009) explains that a Grade 1 student who is half a year behind peers needs far less extensive

intervention than a Grade 4 student who is two years behind or a Grade 9 student who is four years behind. He writes, “younger students can catch up faster, or with less extensive and less expensive efforts, than is the case for older readers” (Allington, 2009, p. 6). Allington (2009) asserts interventions must be scheduled as *additional* reading instruction if readers who struggle are expected to learn to read faster than achieving students, and as such advises that interventions do not take place during regularly scheduled literacy blocks or core curriculum content lessons (p. 15). Maintaining consistency throughout his scholarship, Allington (2009) asserts that effective Tier 1 classroom-wide supports begin with selecting appropriate print materials for each learner (p. 3).

Similar to the innovative interventions discussed in *Summer Reading* (2013), Allington (2009) suggests after school supports where administrators hire teachers with flex-time schedules so instruction can be provided before/after school to create additional opportunities for every reader who is struggling to participate in very small group interventions (p. 87). Logically, when intervention efforts dramatically increase the amount of reading instruction offered, student growth is more likely to be experienced (p. 16). Although Allington cautioned against mandating summer school as a potentially discriminatory practice in *Summer Reading*, he does not likewise caution against extending the school day for students who struggle: he recommends flex-time scheduling as a promising solution.

As explored in Allington’s work on readers who struggle, he believes best- practice instruction involves having students work on improving their reading skills via text-reader matches all day long. Allington’s (2009) RTI initiative offers hope: if implemented correctly, readers who struggle may receive access to high-quality lessons with text-reader compatibility all day long (p. 3). While his work on readers who struggle emphasizes quality of instruction and

the capacity of the teacher, and his work on summer setback highlights the importance of reading volume and self-teaching, Allington's work on RTI extends the conversation on those topics and adds the design of an intervention model to support the needs of all learners. Consistency is one of Allington's strengths and throughout his scholarship he maintains teachers should be accountable for all students in their classrooms; his research on RTI lends further support to the notion of teacher accountability. The RTI model places accountability on classroom teachers before delegating the responsibility to specialist teachers to remediate what should be instructional best-practices in whole class design.

Compellingly, Allington (2009) contends that within the context of a general education classroom teachers need to distribute their time *unequally* between students, paying particular attention to the learners who struggle with reading. He (2009) describes this allocation of time as *fair* because being responsive to student needs evens out differences between students (p. 11), and he explains that students who struggle need to be provided with more and better reading instruction than that provided to other students (p. 11). If, after receiving a second daily reading lesson, the student does not move into the average reading achievement range, schools need to provide Tier 2 or 3 interventions. Allington (2009) is deliberate in his recommendations that interventions must occur *in addition* to classroom literacy instruction; that is, interventions must offer extra, intensive, and expert reading support (p. 17). As such, Allington (2009) recommends a daily 30-minute expert lesson with a maximum of three students as a basic time allocation model for any intervention intended to close the reading gap for younger readers who struggle (p. 17).

Intervention models.

Allington (2009) identifies design principles that effective intervention models need to incorporate. In his work on readers who struggle, Allington cautioned against ‘planned fragmentation’ where extra support is not coordinated with classroom instructional supports; likewise, in his RTI work Allington (2009) maintains curricular coordination is key to facilitating accelerated reading progress (pp. 91-92). When reading lessons are well coordinated between what is taught in the classroom and in intervention efforts, results have revealed much better outcomes for readers who struggle (Allington, 2009, p. 104). Allington (2009) emphasizes that coordination does not imply interventions replicate classroom lessons but that they complement instruction by adding breadth and balance (p. 104). Allington (2009) devotes an entire chapter of his RTI book to the importance of expert teachers in delivering interventions. He cautions against overreliance on teaching assistants if quality intervention efforts are to be accomplished. Allington (2009) explains EA/SEAs are often enthusiastically embraced by teachers; Allington hypothesizes the enthusiasm related to their presence may be due to the reduced pressure on teachers to provide individualized attention for students who struggle (p. 107). However, Allington reminds educators that the most difficult to teach students need powerful instruction delivered by well trained teachers (p. 107). Allington (2009) firmly attributes success as contingent upon expertise, explaining that effective teachers possess the instructional expertise to deliver adaptive teaching that is responsive to each learner’s needs (pp. 114-115).

Also consistent across all of Allington’s work is the idea that lessons need to incorporate appropriately levelled texts (Allington, 2009, p. 31). Ensuring all readers are given texts matching their ability level enables teachers to then ensure volumes of reading material are consumed; Allington (2009) advises two-thirds of intervention periods be spent engaging in

high-success texts (p. 60). Reading volume fosters the development of reading fluency and accuracy; additionally, high success reading activity that occurs in volumes promotes the development of proficiencies related to higher-order cognitive strategies such as summarizing, self-monitoring for understanding, and implementing repair strategies (2009, p. 66). In order to deliver interventions effectively schools must be supplied with ample quantities of books.

Another theme regularly echoed throughout Allington's (2009, 2012) scholarship is his emphasis on the importance of investing school resources in book purchases.

In his book on RTI Allington devotes a chapter to the importance of fostering meta-cognition and meaning when teaching reading. Allington (2009) explains that research indicates how meaning-emphasis classroom and intervention reading instruction produces significantly better reading achievement when compared to skills-emphasis instruction (p. 142). Interventions focused on developing comprehension and metacognition skills are more likely to accelerate reading development than interventions emphasizing decoding (Allington, 2009, p. 124).

Allington (2009) notes the important role of discussion in student development of understanding of texts. He describes how in a skills-emphasis classroom discussion was observed in roughly one reading lesson every two weeks whereas in a meaning-emphasis classroom discussions were observed in two-thirds of the lessons (2009, p. 125).

Allington (2009) refers to the work by Walczyk and Griffith-Ross (2007) on meta-cognitive strategies where they explained how readers who struggle compensate for and overcome various difficulties as they read: slow down while reading to sort out problems imposed by the text; pause while reading to allow inefficient sub-processes to work; look back a few words to restore information and working memory; read aloud to slow the rate of reading and provide auditory feedback; sound out words; analogize to a known word; use contextual guessing; skip a word; or

reread text (p. 140). Allington (2009) explains that when working with struggling readers it is important not to teach students to engage in learned helplessness- behaviour teachers often perpetuate with students when they interrupt students during reading, give hints to the correct answer, or tell students what to do before they begin to read (p. 141). Allington (2009) discusses the importance of teaching students to independently use meta-cognitive strategies and explains this skill development is achieved by modeling and demonstrating and then leaving the reader alone while they read (p. 141).

As a general classroom design, Allington (2009) states the success of the RTI model is contingent on the percentage of daily time allotted to small group and side-by-side instruction versus whole class instruction (p. 43). Allington (2009) explains whole class instruction with a single text adoption is the least effective method of teaching and describes that when districts begin to consider all-day long intervention designs with multi-sourced, multi-level texts, and small group instruction, side-by-side teaching naturally increases (p. 35). The nature of classroom instruction is a critical factor Allington (2009) identifies as bearing impact on academic achievement: “The more whole class teaching offered, the lower the academic achievement in that school” (p. 35). Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions need to be small in size (1 to 3 children) in order to produce significant achievement growth (Allington, 2009, p. 80). Allington (2009) explains that very small groups of students benefit most because of the less variance in reading levels and needs (p. 82). Allington (2009) again stresses the importance of designing interventions as additional reading instruction and practice time, noting that “if we simply replace some of the classroom reading lesson with the intervention lesson, we add no new minutes of instructional time. If no new minutes of instructional time are added, there is little reason to expect that we will obtain accelerated reading growth” (pp. 82-83).

Concluding remarks about RTI.

Allington's work on RTI strengthens his pre-existing research and scholarship while continuing to add context to current conversations among educators about how to bolster the education system to ensure all readers experience success. Allington's work on RTI explains the current framework for intervention in North America. The book adds to the conversation on building the capacity of educators and the constituents of high quality instruction, but true to Allington's sound stance on best practices, it maintains consistency with his earlier scholarship and adds clarity for teachers wondering how the current RTI system works to support the needs of all students.

In the following section I identify common themes evident throughout all of Allington's research that I reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Central Themes in Allington's Research

- Students need high-quality classroom reading instruction all day long
- Successful reading experiences are critical and can be fostered by appropriate text-reader matches
- Self-teaching is a powerful concept that can be facilitated by allowing students choice in reading selection; research indicates easy access to interesting, appropriate books is essential to accelerating development (2009, pp. 159-160)
- Every classroom should have hundreds of texts at different levels to address diverse learner needs and interests; district money is best spent on buying actual books versus core reading programs, workbooks, or computer programs
- Teachers should abstain from interrupting students during oral reading
- Instruction needs to be explicit, meaningful, and based in authentic reading experiences

- Instructional decisions should consider reading volume versus time allotted to reading
- Teachers who have completed professional development in reading instruction are best equipped to work with the most vulnerable readers
- Summer reading interventions and flex-time teaching schedules are innovative, effective strategies that school districts should consider in order to maximize learning outside the parameters of the regular school day and ensure students are not pulled out for interventions
- Curriculum coherence between classroom and specialist teachers provides superior results
- Students experience the best gains in reading achievement by reading high volumes of texts at their instructional level
- Contextualized reading experiences that consider social context provide best benefits
- Interventions should occur during early primary years for students at-risk
- Classroom teachers are accountable for providing quality education that is responsive to the needs of all learners in their classroom

Conclusion to Allington's Work

Allington's background as an educator first and scholar second shines through in his work: like all quality teachers he manages to uplift his students while simultaneously challenging them to make honest assessments of their own performance. He states that we have, "reasonably clear evidence that we can teach virtually every child to read and have virtually all of them reading on grade level by the end of first grade" (Mathes et al., 2005; Scanlon et al., 2005; Vellutino et al., 1996 as cited in Allington, 2012, p. 3). While Allington holds teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction, he also empowers them by offering clear guidance on how to improve

practice. He cites findings from previous research that have indicated how a nominal amount of time invested in targeted professional development translates into quality instructional practice that can largely eliminate the risk of emergent readers growing up to be older readers who continue to struggle (Allington 2013, p. 524). Allington (2013) notes how adding a classroom coach to support educators also helps create truly effective reading teachers, thereby distributing the responsibility to administrators and school districts to help ensure teachers are properly supported. At the Summit 7 conference I asked Dr. Allington about the best way to become an exemplary teacher. He advised me to find quality mentors, advice echoed throughout his writing: “most [exemplary teachers] credited other exemplary teachers for supporting them and encouraging them to become better teachers and to assume greater professional responsibility for the success of their students” (2002a, p. 746). According to Allington (2015b), the journey to becoming an exemplary teacher consists of effort, motivation, mentorship, and professional development.

In *What Really Matters For Struggling Readers* (Allington, 2012), *Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap* (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013), and *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (Allington, 2009), as well as the selected articles referred to in this chapter, Allington (2013) remains staunchly committed to the belief that the best readers read the most and the poor readers read the least (p. 7), with emphasis on volume of reading as the crux of success. His advice remains consistent in his speeches, books, and articles as reoccurring themes echo throughout his scholarship. He diplomatically presents research findings in a carefully edited manner in his books and articles, but his passion for quality literacy education is truly felt in hearing him speak: as a presenter he is less filtered and even controversial as he brings his research to life with quips and candid remarks.

Critique of Allington's Work

Allington's research has generated many recommendations regarding best practice in reading instruction; however, it is important to recognize that the recommendations are ideals and may be difficult to achieve on the same scale envisioned by Allington. For example, generating a multi-leveled classroom library takes time and resources. Additionally, Allington recommends that reading interventions be considered supplemental and as such not be scheduled during regular classroom reading instruction or core curriculum content lessons. However, these recommendations are challenging to accommodate for a variety of reasons such as scheduling constraints, and in some cases simply may not be feasible, particularly in schools with high needs that arguably demand larger intervention group sizes than the desired 1:3.

Allington could offer recommendations in regards to how to get teachers interested in literacy related professional development; he recognizes the capacity of classroom teachers has to be built but he does not address how to increase teacher motivation. As well, it would be interesting to hear Allington's perspective on how to best in-service EA/SEAs and whether professional development for the paraprofessionals would address his concerns about having these individuals work with students who struggle with reading.

In the presentations I attended at the Summit 7 conference I noted how Allington's discourse and style can be interpreted as brusque towards teachers as he seems to purposefully provoke reactions from audience members. While his books and articles are carefully edited, Allington's manner may impact the reception he receives and some teachers may turn away from his work.

Allington's stance seems to hold teachers as solely responsible for teaching reading because he advocates that teachers need to accept the students as they arrive in Kindergarten without

commenting on the quality or quantity of their early literacy experiences that occur in the parameters of the home. While Allington's sense of responsibility and accountability as a teacher is admirable and certainly teachers are professionals whose job involves teaching children to read, research has indicated the powerful influence of parents/ guardians on children's early literacy experiences.

Finally, it is important to consider the cultural and political context that frames Allington's work. As an American scholar Allington has witnessed how systemic government pressure has interfered with decisions regarding education. The situation in Canada is not comparable, fortunately, as the federal government does not dictate provincial education policy. In British Columbia our educational policy emphasizes personalized learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a) and this approach is congruent with Allington's ideas because it is learner-centered, individualized, and inclusive. British Columbian educational policy also reflects several of Allington's ideas including the recognition that learning occurs along a continuum with learners moving at their own pace; the capacity of teachers is a critical component of student success; and flexibility, engagement, and choice in learning are fundamental to student achievement (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015a).

Chapter 4

PowerPoint Presentation and Reflections

The culmination of this project is the creation of a one hour professional development workshop designed to support the reading development of students and is based on the article, “Every Child, Every Day” by Allington and Gabriel (2012). I used their article as the framework for the workshop which features six guiding principles, and strategies that work in accordance with those principles that teachers can confidently use as the foundation of literacy instruction in their classrooms. In this chapter I explain the content included in the professional development workshop and how it connects to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Every Child, Every Day: Slides 1-6



The first section of PowerPoint slides allows time for me to introduce the topic, familiarize teachers with Allington's work, and give a brief overview of my Master's project. While presenting to teachers I will gauge their background knowledge about Allington's scholarship and adjust my presentation to ensure they are adequately familiarized with his research on a

broad level before delving into specific references to his work with Rachael Gabriel. I will also explain why the article by Allington and Gabriel is used as the framework for the presentation.

To ensure participants are clear about the goals of the presentation, the learning intention is stated on slide two. Slide three contains a quotation by Allington and Gabriel (2012), chosen so participants will begin reflecting on Allington's view that the capacity of the classroom teacher is central to student achievement in literacy. The quote brings attention to the fact that Allington's scholarship (2002a, 2013) is based on the idea that expertise in reading matters. Indeed, according to Allington (2012), the most powerful feature of schools in terms of developing students as readers and writers is the quality of classroom instruction. The quote also supports Allington's (2002a, 2015a) strong belief that teachers need to be accountable for the achievement of all students in their classroom and responsive to their needs. The decision to create a professional development workshop was made largely because Allington's (2012) research consistently points to the importance of supporting professional growth to foster reading achievement.

Every Child, Every Day: Slides 7-11

The image displays five presentation slides arranged in two rows. The top row contains three slides, and the bottom row contains two slides.

- Slide 1 (Top Left):** Titled "#1 Every child everyday reads something they have chosen themselves." It lists three bullet points: "Goal- classroom libraries with multileveled texts", "Time allotted daily to allow for personal choice reading selections", and "Importance of reading volume". It features a colorful graphic of people holding books.
- Slide 2 (Top Middle):** Titled "Encouraging Reading". It shows a "Display Options" graphic with a bookshelf and a list of letters: B, T, o, a, o, l, k, k, s.
- Slide 3 (Top Right):** Titled "Summer Reading Loss =". It contains the equation: $\text{Initial achievement gap} + \text{accumulating reading gap}$. Below it is a flow diagram: "Self-Selected Books" leads to "Increase in Voluntary Reading", which leads to "Self-Teaching". A caption below reads: "Connection Between Free Choice Reading & Summer Reading: volume of summer reading is the best indicator of summer reading loss or gain."
- Slide 4 (Bottom Left):** Titled "Summer Reading Loss". It lists "Factors" such as "Book choice", "SES", "Access to books", and "Academic performance". It includes an image of a person reading in a hammock. A caption states: "Success in school reading increases out-of-school voluntary reading!"
- Slide 5 (Bottom Right):** Titled "Discussion Questions:". It contains three questions: "What are some ways that you have supported free choice reading in your classroom?", "What book genres and titles are your students most interested in?", and "Do students in your classroom or school have access to books during summer months? Is summer reading loss a conversation topic/concern in your school?"

The content on slides 7-11 introduces the framework for the professional development session where teachers will systematically learn about each of the six principles outlined by Allington and Gabriel (2012). For each of the six principles, I have included a slide outlining the principle. Subsequent slides feature ideas for practical implementation and participant discussion or activities. The first principle identified by Allington and Gabriel is the importance of self-selected reading: as described in Chapter 2, offering choice in book selection has been found to produce effects on reading achievement almost twice as large as access to books without choice (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). The slides in this set further connect to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 because throughout his scholarship, Allington clearly states the importance of reading volume and its impact on the development of reading proficiency (2013; 2012, Allington et al., 2010). Allington refers to the work of Brozo et al. 2008, Cipielewski and Stanovich, 1992 who found evidence that volume is linked to attaining higher-order literacy proficiencies (as cited in Allington, 2012, p. 44). Another central theme in Allington's scholarship is the importance of access to resources and having classroom libraries with multileveled texts (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013; 2012).

Allington's work is rich with practical, easily implemented strategies to interest and engage students in books; the second slide in this set outlines some of his ideas for encouraging reading that are included in *What Really Matters For Struggling Readers* (2012). Allington (2012) explains that books should be accessible to children, and visibly displayed with the covers facing forward rather than spines (p. 95) as well as the power of doing quick book talks to generate interest (p. 193). The work by Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) on summer reading connects to the principle of free choice reading because their study involved students self-selecting books for voluntary summer reading, so it seemed logical to connect that aspect of

Allington's scholarship to this group of slides. As the topic of summer reading is not something I have heard discussed by my colleagues, the slides provide participants with the opportunity to generate conversation about the topic and with an overview of contributing factors, and again reinforce the idea that free choice in text selection fosters voluntary reading (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). The slides on summer reading also afford me with the opportunity to explain how Allington has considered Share and Stanovich's self-teaching hypothesis as it applies to voluntary reading (2003, 2010, 2011, 2013). The discussion questions are designed to encourage reflection and to provide teachers the opportunity to contribute their thoughts on what they have noticed about their students' reading habits.

Every Child, Every Day: Slides 12-15

#2 Every child reads accurately.
Determine reading levels
Teach students how to make appropriate books selections

Strategies to Build Reading Accuracy

- › Considerations when making book selections
- › Model self-selecting books using a 'think aloud' approach
- › Book series

Practice
Preview-Pause-Prompt-Praise (PPPP)

Key Prompts to Use:
M/S/V

- Does that sound right?
- Does that make sense?
- Does that look right?

The content on slides 12-15 serves to familiarize the audience with the second principle recommended by Allington and Gabriel (2012): increasing reading accuracy. The importance of appropriate text selection is a concept emphasized by Allington throughout his scholarship (2002a, 2007, 2012, 2013; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). Allington (2012) explains




students need instructional level texts that they can read accurately, fluently, and with good comprehension so that academic achievement can be fostered (p. 73). Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) describe how children need consistent access to explicit demonstration of the thinking proficient readers engage in before, during, and after reading (p. 14) and offer guidelines for book selection based on their observation that most readers who struggle were inexperienced at self-selecting text (p. 105). In *What Really Matters For Struggling Readers* (2012), Allington suggests strategies such as blessing books (p. 193), which involves featuring a few books each day and telling the students a bit about them, or reading a page or two from the books to generate interest. Allington also explains the value he sees in book series stating that although they are often underappreciated these series books enable children to build the skills and interest to read better-quality books (Allington, 2012, p. 91). Allington (2012) also points out that many adult avid readers can recall a book series that hooked them into reading (p. 91).

Slide 14 features another strategy Allington (2012, p. 109) recommends, Preview-Pause-Prompt-Praise (PPPP). I will allow time to for teachers to practice the PPPP strategy, which Allington describes as being popularized by Keith Topping (1987 as cited in Allington, 2012), and which has been shown to have positive effects on building fluency and general reading achievement (p. 109).

The last slide in this section supports reading accuracy with three useful prompts that teachers can use to cue students to attend to meaning while reading. The prompts were originally created by Marie Clay (1993) and hopefully are familiar to the teachers as the prompts are widely used in this district and beyond as common language structures to use with all readers; the prompts were included in the 2006 Grade 1 English Language Arts curriculum document (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006) and shared at Changing Results For Young

Readers meetings. Including the M/S/V prompts on slide 15 will foster discussion about Allington's research on teacher interruption behaviours (1980, 2013, 2014) and reinforce how the prompts are effective cues for teachers to teach and use and for students to learn. Allington (2012 as cited in 2014) noted that independent reading with good comprehension is the ultimate goal of literacy instruction (p. 16) and mentions current observations have found reading instruction continues to separate students into two groups – good readers who self-regulate, and readers who struggle who constantly look to their teachers for cues (p. 18). Allington has found that readers who struggle are often interrupted immediately and cued to correct surface-level errors (2014). The M/S/V prompts were selected to support the observation by Allington and Gabriel (2012) that when students read accurately, they solidify their word analysis skills, and perhaps more importantly, they are likely to understand what they read, and as a result, to enjoy reading (p. 11). The prompts serve several purposes: they help students develop their own strategies, build metacognition, and cue readers to attend to meaning. The prompts simultaneously encourage reading accuracy as well as build comprehension, and they lead the presentation to the next grouping of slides which introduces the third principle: comprehension.

Every Child, Every Day: Slides 16-19

<p>#3 Every child reads something he or she understands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Types of reading › Foster development of higher level literacy skills: making connections, inferencing, visualizing, predicting, activating background knowledge › Explicit instruction 	<p>Discussion Question:</p>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>How do you check for student understanding?</p> </div>	<p>#4 Every child writes about something personally meaningful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Find out what students are excited about, tie it to the curriculum, and create writing experiences that are meaning-based › Power of writing for an audience 
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Slide 16 features principle 3: every child, every day reads something they understand. Allington and Gabriel (2012) focus teacher attention on the importance of reading comprehension; Allington explains that researchers have known for two decades that when classroom reading lessons for struggling readers are meaning focused, struggling readers improve more than when they are skills focused (Knapp, 1995 as cited in Allington 2013). The three phrases on Slide 16 are to facilitate discussion and review familiar instructional techniques that aim to build comprehension. Slide 17 honours the knowledge of the teachers at the workshop by affording an opportunity to share strategies they use to assess comprehension.

On slide 18 I address the fourth principle Allington and Gabriel (2012) outline: every child writes about something personally meaningful. Allington (2013) discusses the link between encouraging inventive writing and motivation (p. 522), connecting that to the idea that children will use the conventions of grammar and spelling when they want to communicate their message (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2010 as cited in Allington & Gabriel, 2012) and the overall idea of the power of writing for an audience because children have to think about what words will best convey their ideas to their readers (Allington & Gabriel, 2012). Allington (2009 as cited in 2013) explains there is evidence that everything from phonemic awareness, to phonics, to comprehension, is developed through independent reading and

writing (p. 526). Allington (2012, 2013) explains time and time again that isolated skills instruction is not an effective instructional technique.

Slides Every Child, Every Day: Slides 20-25

<p>#5 Every child talks with their peers about reading & writing.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build conversation items into daily lesson planning, i.e.: "turn to the person next to you and share something you liked about the book" Talk should be conversational <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>	<p>Strategies to increase on-task talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/B partner talk Turn/ pair/ share technique Other strategies to try?  <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>	<p>#6 Every child listens to a fluent adult reader read aloud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-impact, low-input strategy Expressive read-alouds A few minutes each day supports readers in developing reading fluency (ability to read aloud with accuracy, prosody and expression)  <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>
<p>Reading aloud...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is reading aloud to your class an activity that you do daily? Favourite books to read aloud? Do you agree with Allington that reading aloud to students is time well spent?  <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>	<p>Every Child, Every Day</p> <p><i>In a learning environment focused on success for all readers, every child, every day:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reads something he/she has chosen him/herself. reads accurately. reads something he or she understands. writes about something personally meaningful. talks with peers about his/her reading and writing. listens to a fluent adult reader read aloud. <p><small>*Richard Allington, Educational Leadership, March 2002</small></p> <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>	<p>Allington's Guidelines for Time Spent on Daily Reading and Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 minutes = minimum recommended goal for daily time spent on in-school reading 30-45 minutes per day on writing  <p><small>Lagipon Ball 2013</small></p>

Outlined on slides 20 and 21 is the fifth principle defined by Allington and Gabriel (2012): every child talks with their peers about reading and writing. This principle draws attention to the importance of fostering thoughtful literacy discussions about reading and writing. Allington (2002a, 2012) has explored the concept of classroom talk extensively over the years and explains thoughtful literacy is more than remembering what the text said: it is engaging in the ideas, challenging those ideas, reflecting on them, and so on. Literate conversations are one way that thoughtful literacy can be fostered (Allington, 2012, p. 154) and he advises the guideline of never ask a question that can be answered in one word (p. 154). In Allington's (2002a) well known article about the Six T's of effective teaching discussed in Chapter 2, he explains that exemplary teachers foster more teacher/ student and student/ student talk that is purposeful in nature, and that the talk is also encouraged, modeled, supported and characterized as problem-

posing, problem-solving talk related to curricular topics (p. 744). The recommendation that the nature of classroom talk be conversational stems from Allington et al.'s (2002) study on exemplary teachers where the researchers concluded all classroom talk, including instructional talk, should be conversational rather than interrogational in nature. Techniques to support and facilitate the development of classroom talk such as A/B partner talk and turn/pair/share are featured on supporting slide 21. I also ask participants to generate additional activities that can be used to foster conversational talk in the classroom, allowing the teachers to share their own ideas and learn from each other's experiences. Allington (2014) notes that research findings suggest that teachers must begin to develop their expertise in initiating and managing classroom discussions and recommends turn/pair/share as an instructional move, paired along with modeling of the conversations and how to 'whisper talk' (p. 21).

Slide 22 features Allington and Gabriel's (2012) sixth and final principle: every child, every day will listen to a fluent adult model read. Allington and Gabriel (2012) stated that listening to an adult model read is an underused strategy that supports readers and simply requires the decision to use class time more effectively. On slide 23 I have posed questions to teachers to encourage the sharing of professional opinions about the use of modeling fluent reading and to allow discussion about good books to use for read-alouds.

On slide 24 I listed the six principles as a review of the information examined so far in the presentation. Teachers can ask questions and the opportunity to check for understanding will be provided. The content on the last slide in this grouping, slide 25, offers concrete guidelines that Allington (2012) suggests as time allotments in regards to daily reading and writing volume (p. 62).

Every Child, Every Day: Slides 26-30

Connections to Allington's Scholarship on Readers Who Struggle

Ways to Support Readers Who Struggle

- engage in professional development
- design thoughtful literacy lessons
- teach how to select texts
- provide effective instruction
- encourage students
- provide LOTS of time to read



Leggier, 2011

What Does Not Help Readers Who Struggle

- Engaging in isolated skills-based instruction
- Blaming students' struggles on perceived flaws in character
- Putting the responsibility on specialist teachers/paraprofessionals
- Using round robin reading

Readers who struggle thrive in differentiated classrooms because interventions are planned as an all-day-long affair.

Allington (2007)

Which Tier Do The 6 Principles Allington & Gabriel Outlined Correspond to in the RTI Model?



RTI (Response To Intervention)
3 Tiers of Support

Leggier, 2011

Discussion Points:

- How does Allington's scholarship align with the revised ELA curriculum documents?
- How does your experience in teaching reading instruction connect to the article by Allington and Gabriel?
- Is there anything you would add to Allington's "Every Child, Every Day" article?



Leggier, 2011

"I believe every child is different and therefore each child is likely to require a unique approach when learning to read. Thus, classroom teachers must develop a wide range of expertise about reading instruction in order to serve every child well."

(Allington, personal communication, February 24, 2015).



Leggier, 2011

Slide 26 features a summary of key points in Allington's (2012) scholarship about ways to support readers who struggle. This slide was included because Chapter 2 was devoted to Allington's work on supporting readers who struggle and I wanted to speak to that topic as it is an area of foci for Allington and the six principles outlined by Allington and Gabriel (2012) are designed to be naturally differentiated to support all learners in any given classroom. The goal of including the content on slide 26 is to facilitate a discussion of best-practice instructional techniques for readers who struggle and for how teachers can meet their needs in the classroom, and if necessary, to continue the conversation about teacher accountability. The points on slide 27 reflect Allington's (2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014) extensive research around supporting readers who struggle and his observations on ineffective instructional decisions.

I developed slide 28 so that I could share what I learned from reading Allington's book, *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* (2009b), as my experiences lead me to believe that

RTI is not a well understood topic among teachers and this slide will raise awareness about it. Allington and Gabriel's (2012) six principles fall under Tier 1 core classroom instructional practices. The information on slide 28 will facilitate conversation about the fact that RTI is a general education initiative (Allington, 2009b) designed to supplement, not replace the type of quality classroom instruction discussed by Allington and Gabriel (2012). The information about RTI is included in the last grouping of slides because it allows me to begin concluding the presentation, and acts to synthesize the discussion about the six principles and how they powerfully connect to instructional examples serving as Tier 1 best practice supports.

The first discussion point on slide 30 was designed to include time to talk about the English Language Arts curriculum documents that were recently released on the Ministry of Education website (2015). Teachers will be able to use this time to consider how Allington's scholarship aligns with the revised curriculum and to think about how the concepts can merge into classroom practice. The remaining two questions on slide 30 are more general in nature and were created to ensure everyone's questions were answered and to begin bringing the workshop to a close. Slide 31, the last in the grouping, contains a quotation by Allington (2015) that returns the focus to a central tenet in his research: that teacher expertise must be developed and as professionals, teachers are in part responsible for engaging in and building their own capacity through professional development, to ensure they have the ability to offer a variety of instructional techniques and strategies when teaching their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for research emerged after reviewing Allington's scholarship and reflecting on education in British Columbia. The recommendations related to provincial initiatives and classroom practice have developed from connections between

Allington's work and how it connects to what is happening in schools in the province, while the subsection on Allington's recommendations for research contains recommendations that are directly stated in his scholarship.

Provincial initiatives.

- How does the updated British Columbia English Language Arts curriculum and the emphasis on big ideas impact the reading achievement levels of our students?
- How does the updated British Columbia English Language Arts curriculum, which emphasizes personalized education and movement away from prescribed learning outcomes, impact student engagement and motivation?
- What effect has the provincial initiative, Changing Results for Young Readers, had on capacity-building for teachers and how has that benefitted students?
- How effective has the Response to Intervention initiative been in addressing the reading achievement gap of Canadian and British Columbian children?

Classroom practice.

- How, and if so, to what extent does developing teacher expertise in areas such as effective questioning techniques and facilitating literate conversations impact student progress?
- How, and if so, to what extent has the Response to Intervention initiative, and professional development around the tiers of intervention and Tier 1 supports in particular, impacted teachers' sense of accountability and responsibility to work with *all* learners?

- In schools where intervention has been reconceptualized as an all-day affair like Allington advocates, how has student progress been impacted? How has teacher workload been impacted and what has been the reaction to such impacts?

Allington's recommendations for research.

- Are we creating schools in which every year every teacher becomes more expert?
- How do readers benefit from different interruption strategies at different developmental stages?
- How does enriching our understanding about the nature of curriculum and instruction foster achievement?
- What are the potential positive effects of using more complex texts in reading lessons?

Reflections

About a month before I registered for my project-based semester I began thinking about research topics. I knew I wanted to examine something within the broad parameters of elementary-aged literacy instruction. A brainstorming session with a colleague helped me decide to review the work of a scholar and after a conversation with Dr. Pantaleo, I chose to centre my research on the work of Richard Allington and Marie Clay. I chose to review their work because I had heard so many references to their scholarship. I began expanding my knowledge base by searching the internet, talking to Dr. Pantaleo and colleagues, and after some rudimentary exploration I finalized my decision and ordered a few of their books online.

I began with Allington's work on readers who struggle because I felt it was most relevant to the position I had as a Learner Support Teacher. I was engaged when reading his work because it is written in accessible, common-sense language rather than muddled by the difficult vocabulary

that oftentimes defines scholarly research. Allington's work became more intriguing to me when I realized the volume of research he had produced, and the fact that he is a contemporary researcher who used to teach. My interest was further piqued when I realized he would be presenting at a conference in a nearby city. As my topic evolved and I selected work of Allington's to focus on, it became apparent that I had abundant material and would neither be able to review all of his research nor explore Clay's work as well. I put aside Clay's books for future reading.

Over the course of this journey many decisions were made and the project evolved accordingly. Central to my interest and satisfaction during the process were my many professional conversations with colleagues. Having colleagues interested in hearing about my project and asking me questions about my learning pushed me to articulate what I was researching. Discussing my Master's project helped me refine the project's focus and offered review of the topics, making it easier to remember the new content I was discovering. I have always felt fortunate to have strong mentors and colleagues in my workplaces, district, and beyond.

Seeing Dr. Allington present at the Kamloops Summit in February 2015 cultivated a deeper interest to know his work and being able to speak with him for a period of time at the Summit helped inform and motivate me to continue studying his work. It is worth noting that Dr. Allington's generosity with his time is a testament to his belief that capacity building in teachers is a powerful strategy to improving results for readers. I appreciated how he took time to answer my questions, offered some suggestions for my project, and confirmed my hunch that seeking out good mentors is part of building exemplary teachers. The conversation also solidified my

decision to create a professional development workshop as the project portion of my Master's project so that I could share what I had learned and begin giving back professionally.

When working on my project I focused on completing chunks of writing and eventually my work grew into something more substantial. I felt especially motivated when my voice began emerging from the research. One aspect that caused me to reflect was the more I familiarized myself with Allington's work, the more I realized that this project was the beginning of a much longer journey: Allington is clear that achievement in reading stems largely from the capacity of the teacher and quality of instruction. It became very apparent to me that this project is a beginning, and I understand that I have to continue being proactive in improving my own professional practice if I want to truly do the best for my students.

When I approached Allington at the Summit conference I asked him how I could best serve my students as a Learner Support Teacher. His response was that I should switch to being a classroom teacher if I really wanted to make a difference. By May when job postings in my district came up, I had decided to follow his advice and give classroom teaching a try for the 2015/2016 school year, something I had always aspired to do. This choice, alongside the decision to use the article by Allington and Gabriel (2012) as the framework for the professional development workshop I planned, resulted in further transformation to the project portion of my Master's as I changed my intended audience from professional development for Education Assistants to teachers.

The completion of this project, by far the largest academic endeavour I have completed to-date, has made me reflect on how far out of my personal comfort zone it has taken me. Being uncomfortable with the scale of the project and my own reservations about my capabilities has proven empowering as I completed sections of work and the project gained momentum. Another

challenge I faced and will continue to face is apprehension about doing presentations. This project and the coursework involved in completing a Master of Education degree have strengthened my confidence and ability to speak in front of colleagues as well as made me realize that I have developed a breadth of knowledge that should be shared with others. Building my own background knowledge around literacy has taken me to the next step of my professional journey which involves application of that knowledge to my own instructional practices, particularly as I transition from my role as a Learner Support Teacher to a Grades 2/3 teacher. I am excited to apply the knowledge I have gained while completing this project to my classroom instruction and to continue building my capacity as a classroom teacher.

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Appendix

“Every Child, Every Day”: Presentation based on Dr. Allington’s Scholarship on the Six Essential Elements of Effective Reading Instruction


“Every Child, Every Day”

Presentation based on Dr. Allington’s
Scholarship on the Six Essential Elements of
Effective Reading Instruction


–From Theory to Practice–

By Leighan Bell

SD #54



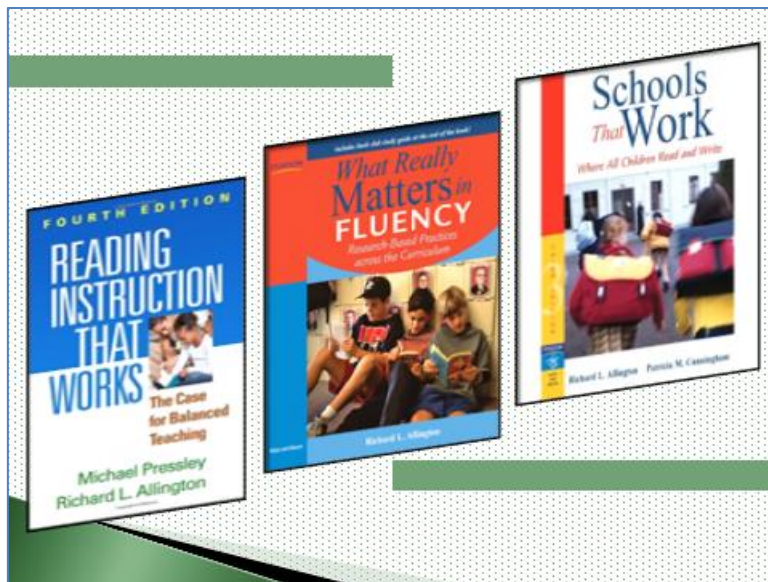
Learning Intention:
To review the six principles identified by
Allington and Gabriel and offer
suggestions on how to support the
principles in the classroom.



“It’s time for the elements of effective instruction described here to be offered more consistently to every child, in every school, every day. Remember, adults have the power to make these decisions; kids don’t. Let’s decide to give them the type of instruction they need” (Allington & Gabriel, 2012, p. 13).



A selection of Allington’s Scholarship



#1 Every child everyday reads something they have chosen themselves.

- › Goal- classroom libraries with multileveled texts
- › Time allotted daily to allow for personal choice reading selections
- › Importance of reading volume



Encouraging Reading

B T
o a
o l
k k
s

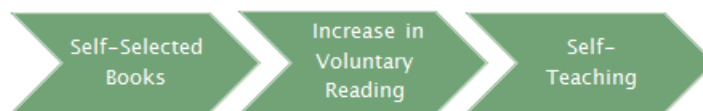


Display
Options



Summer Reading Loss =

Initial achievement gap + accumulating reading gap



Connection Between Free Choice Reading & Summer Reading : volume of summer reading is the best indicator of summer reading loss or gain.

Summer Reading Loss

Factors

- Book choice
- SES
- Access to books
- Academic performance



Success in school reading increases out-of-school voluntary reading!

Discussion Questions:



What are some ways that you have supported free choice reading in your classroom?

What book genres and titles are your students most interested in?

Do students in your classroom or school have access to books during summer months? Is summer reading loss a conversation topic/concern in your school?

#2 Every child reads accurately.

Determine reading levels



Teach students how to make appropriate books selections



Strategies to Build Reading Accuracy

- › Considerations when making book selections
- › Model self-selecting books using a 'think aloud' approach
- › Book series



Practice

Preview–Pause–Prompt–Praise
(PPPP)



Key Prompts to Use:
M/S/V

Does that sound right?

Does that make sense?

Does that look right?

#3 Every child reads something he or she understands.

- ▶ Types of reading
- ▶ Foster development of higher level literacy skills: making connections, inferencing, visualizing, predicting, activating background knowledge
- ▶ Explicit instruction



Discussion Question:



**How do you
check for
student
understanding?**

#4 Every child writes about something personally meaningful.

- › Find out what students are excited about, tie it to the curriculum, and create writing experiences that are meaning-based
- › Power of writing for an audience



How can we foster engagement
and joy in **writing**?



#5 Every child talks with their peers
about reading & writing.



- ▶ Build conversation items into daily lesson planning, i.e.: “turn to the person next to you and share something you liked about the book”
- ▶ Talk should be conversational

Strategies to increase on-task talk

- ▶ A/B partner talk
- ▶ Turn/ pair/ share technique
- ▶ Other strategies to try?



Leighan Ball 2015

#6 Every child listens to a fluent adult reader read aloud.

- ▶ High-impact, low-input strategy
- ▶ Expressive read-alouds
- ▶ A few minutes each day supports readers in developing reading fluency (ability to read aloud with accuracy, prosody and expression)



Reading aloud...

› Is reading aloud to your class an activity that you do daily?

› Favourite books to read aloud?



› Do you agree with Allington that reading aloud to students is time well spent?

Every Child, Every Day

In a learning environment focused on success for all readers, every child, every day:

🏀 reads something he/she has chosen him/herself.

📖 reads accurately.

📚 reads something he or she understands.

✍️ writes about something personally meaningful.

🗣️ talks with peers about his/her reading and writing.

👂 listens to a fluent adult reader read aloud.

*Richard Allington, Educational Leadership, March 2012

Allington's Guidelines for Time Spent on Daily Reading and Writing:

- › 90 minutes = minimum recommended goal for daily time spent on in-school reading



- › 30-45 minutes per day on writing

Connections to Allington's Scholarship on Readers Who Struggle

Ways to Support Readers Who Struggle

- engage in professional development
- design thoughtful literacy lessons
- teach how to select texts
- provide effective instruction
- encourage students
- provide LOTS of time to read



What Does Not Help Readers Who Struggle

- ▶ Engaging in isolated skills-based instruction
- ▶ Blaming students' struggles on perceived flaws in character
- ▶ Putting the responsibility on specialist teachers/paraprofessionals
- ▶ Using round robin reading

Readers who struggle thrive in differentiated classrooms because interventions are planned as an all-day-long affair.

Allington (2007)

Which Tier Do The 6 Principles Allington & Gabriel Outlined Correspond to in the RTI Model?



RTI (Response To Intervention)

3 Tiers of Support

Discussion Points:



- › How does Allington's scholarship align with the revised ELA curriculum documents?
- › How does your experience in teaching reading instruction connect to the article by Allington and Gabriel?
- › Is there anything you would add to Allington's "Every Child, Every Day" article?

"I believe every child is different and therefore each child is likely to require a unique approach when learning to read. Thus, classroom teachers must develop a wide range of expertise about reading instruction in order to serve every child well."

(Allington, personal communication, February 24, 2015).



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