

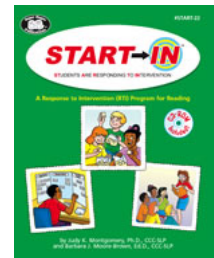
Florida Center for Reading Research

STudents Are Responding To Intervention
(START-IN)

What is *START-IN*?

START-IN is a nine week intervention program for struggling readers in grades 3-8. It is designed as a Tier III response to intervention (RTI) program whose goal is to reduce the number of referrals to special education. It simultaneously addresses the five components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students who are at least two grade levels below in reading, have received other reading interventions at the school (Tier II), and have been brought before the pre-referral study team at least twice are ideal participants in this program. Small groups of students, no more than five, are taught daily for one hour lessons outside of the reading block. Each lesson moves through a series of 16 tasks for a total of 45 hours of instruction per student. The average Task length is 2-5 minutes.

The authors recommend this program as part of a school or district level initiative as it will require the reallocation of personnel resources. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs), special educators, or other professionals with reading expertise are suggested instructors in a collaborative approach (e.g., the SLP may provide instruction for two days and the other professional for three days). It is not recommended for paraprofessionals to provide instruction using *START-IN*. A clear and detailed scope and sequence is not provided as part of the program. Students are pre-tested, provided 45 hours of instruction using the 16 tasks, and post-tested. A list of suggested assessment tools are provided, but are not part of the program.



Within each lesson the sequence is consistent in that the instructor must always start with Task 1, but Tasks 2-16 can occur in any order. Tasks 1-3 involve phonemic awareness: Task 1 is a read aloud from a grade level fiction or trade book; Task 2 is repeating sentences and sounds in words using words selected from the trade book; Task 3 is syllable identification using words from the trade book. Task 4-6 involve phonics activities: Task 4 is student identification of syllable types within words selected from the trade book; Task 5 is a word baggie task which requires students to make words from a selection of letters that spell a secret word and these words are also selected from the trade book; Task 6 is Personal Word Walls. Tasks 7 and 8 consist of fluency activities: Task 7 is independently reading an appropriate level text for five minutes and Task 8 is a prosody building activity with dialogue from the text from Task 1 or 7. Task 9 is a vocabulary building activity with compound words from the trade book. Tasks 10-12 are fluency building activities including timed readings and chunking of text from the trade book or independent reading book. Task 13 focuses on text comprehension after being read to by the instructor and completing retells using the Story Grammar Marker. Task 14 requires students to practice reading sight words from their Personal Word Walls. Task 15 focuses on text comprehension via reading with a purpose using grade-level text. Task 16 encompasses reading and writing for meaning. Students create a Little Book and summarize key lesson objectives in it.

The only required additional purchases for implementing *START-IN* are the instructor's manual and the Story Grammar Marker Manipulative. A complete listing of necessary materials needed to effectively use the program with five students is listed in the manual. It includes materials many schools already have or could purchase from a local office supply store: paper, envelopes, card stock, index cards, plastic chips, sticky notes, magic markers, sandwich bags, cardboard, highlighters, tagboard, Velcro. For an additional purchase one may select to order the *START-IN* Kit. It includes all the materials one would need to implement the program with a small group of five students. *START-IN* does not come with assessment tools. The interventionists must decide what instruments to use as pre and post tests and what to use to monitor progress. Suggestions are made by the authors and the manual itself includes all the reproducible forms in hard copy and on CD-ROM (e.g., administrator observation form and data collection forms such as fluency checks) for each task requiring data to be recorded.

How is *START-IN* aligned with Current Research?

START-IN is marketed as a RTI program for reading; however, RTI is not a program it is a model for providing instruction to all students, including struggling readers. The data from the progress monitoring instruments used during instruction can be used as one component for identifying learning disabilities as an alternative approach to the aptitude-achievement discrepancy model currently in use (Fletcher, Francis, Morris, & Lyon, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Torgesen, 2007). Typically, RTI is discussed in terms of multiple tiers of instruction: Tier I encompassing core reading instruction, Tier II supplemental/intervention and Tier III intensive intervention for students who are failing to make adequate progress with Tiers I and II (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Depending on who is implementing *START-IN*, their level of expertise and materials used, this program could be categorized as a Tier III intervention.

START-IN is designed to be implemented daily for one hour sessions outside of the reading block. This is time intensive instruction occurring in small groups that is consistent with Tier III intervention. However, the lack of lesson plans or explicit and systematic instruction provided for educators in the *START-IN* manual makes it difficult to determine if there is systematic and explicit instruction provided to students. The steps in each of the 16 Tasks are outlined for educators, but instructional materials and specific lessons to be taught are left up to the educator to create. Only one detailed sample lesson is provided in the manual as a guide.

The *START-IN* manual specifically addresses the inclusion of the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000) as being essential elements of quality reading instruction. In phonemic awareness tasks, phonological awareness is practiced with students: word and syllable awareness with one sub-step of Task 2 being individual phoneme identification. Phoneme segmentation ability is highly correlated to reading success; however, a limited number of instructional minutes are spent on this task. The trade book or fictional story from Task 1 is the basis for the instruction of Tasks 2-16; this limits the range of words available for word work. The trade book being used may not provide the educator with the instructional support necessary to implement his/her lesson with a sufficient number of practice opportunities in a systematic, scaffolded sequence. Student success with this program is highly dependent on the skill level of the educators who are providing the instruction. There is little instructor guidance on how to pace instruction, other than minutes per task, for students (e.g., how many syllable types are taught per day, per week). Tasks that address fluency, vocabulary and

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comprehension include additional practice opportunities, but again little instructional guidance. For example, vocabulary instruction is provided via listening to the read aloud (Task 1) and Task 9 which is a compound word game. It is unclear how the educator will know when to move on from compound words to other vocabulary instructional tasks.

Professional development is not included or required to purchase *START-IN*. Individuals have the option of taking an online video course at National CEU. Schools may have a publisher representative come to their site for a two hour overview of the program or the first author is also available for a full day seminar on how to implement *START-IN*. School-wide participation is recommended for successful implementation and a student progress monitoring system must be in place.

Research Support for *START-IN*



START-IN was published in 2006. Prior to its publication the authors of the program conducted a two year pilot study in an urban school district in California using the intervention protocol that has become *START-IN* (Moore-Brown, Montgomery, Bielinski, & Shubin, 2005). The district, in conjunction with the authors, was looking to effectively implement RTI in the schools using a tier 3 intervention. A pre-post test with no control group design was implemented to investigate the effectiveness of a short-term intervention with 123 fourth and fifth grade students. The authors reported a moderate effect size of .41 for year one and year two of the study combined. However, this should be interpreted with caution because without the presence of a control group it can not be determined that the gains made by the students are attributable to the intervention. In addition, the authors did not provide a breakdown of student performance in the reading domains (e.g., phonological awareness, vocabulary, etc.) so it remains unclear as to what aspects of reading *START-IN* was potentially effective. Future studies with rigorous experimental designs including control groups may determine the efficacy of the *START-IN* protocol.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *START-IN*:

- List of materials needed and sample forms are included in the manual.
- Ready-made materials available for purchase.
- Skilled Educator/SLP may move through each day's lesson with appropriate pacing to maintain student interest.

Weaknesses of *START-IN*:

- Intensive preplanning of each day's lesson is required of SLP/Educator to complete each of the 16 tasks in the allotted time.
- It is recommended for at least two special educators to deliver the program, but further details on how to split instruction between the two educators are not included in the manual.
- Scope and sequence, lesson to lesson, is left for instructor to devise.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement *START-IN*?

Miami-Dade 305-995-1206

For More Information

<http://www.superduperinc.com/landing/rti.asp?sid=44>

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

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