The Four Cs of RTI:

If our goal is to create the right way of thinking about our work as educators, then what are the essential principles that must guide our actions? What practices must we follow if we want all students to succeed? We believe there are four—we call them the four Cs of RTI. They are:

1. Collective responsibility

A shared belief that the primary responsibility of each member of the organization is to ensure high levels of learning for every child.

Thinking is guided by the question: Why are we here?

2. Concentrated instruction

A systematic process of identifying essential knowledge and skills that all students must master to learn at high levels, and determining the specific learning needs for each child to get there.

Thinking is guided by the question: Where do we need to go?

3. Convergent assessment

An ongoing process of collectively analyzing targeted evidence to determine the specific learning needs of each child and the effectiveness of the instruction the child receives in meeting these needs.

Thinking is guided by the question: Where are we now?

4. Certain access. A systematic process that guarantees every student will receive the time and support needed to learn at high levels. Thinking is guided by the question: How do we get every child there?

We contend that these four Cs are the essential guiding principles of RTI.

Consider for a moment the meaning of the word essential. When something is essential, it is absolutely indispensable, so important to the whole that the whole cannot survive without it. Without each of the four Cs, it is impossible for a school to achieve high levels of learning for every child. The four Cs work interdependently to create the systems, structures, and processes needed to provide every child with additional time and support.
Three Essential RTI Teams:

**Collaborative Teacher Teams**

Collaborative teacher teams are teams comprised of educators who share curriculum, and thus take collective responsibility for students learning their common essential learning outcomes. Most often, these are teachers who teach the same grade level, subject, and/or course. The responsibilities of each teacher team in the RTI process is as follows:

- Clearly define essential student learning outcomes
- Provide effective Tier 1 core instruction
- Assess student learning and the effectiveness of instruction
- Identify students in need of additional time and support
- Take primary responsibility for Tier 2 supplemental interventions for students who have failed to master the team’s identified essential standards

**School Leadership Team**

A school leadership team serves as the “guiding coalition” for the building. Comprised of representatives from each collaborative teacher team, administration, and classified and support staff, this team’s primary responsibility is to unite and coordinate the school’s collective efforts across grade levels, departments, and subjects. To achieve this goal, the school leadership team should specifically:

- Build consensus for the school’s mission of collective responsibility
- Create a master schedule that provides sufficient time for team collaboration, core instruction, supplemental interventions, and intensive interventions
- Coordinate school wide human resources to best support core instruction and interventions, including the site counselor, psychologist, speech and language pathologist, special education teacher, librarian, health services, subject specialists, instructional aides, and other classified staff
- Allocate the school’s fiscal resources to best support core instruction and interventions, including school categorical funding
- Assist with articulating essential learning outcomes across grade levels and subjects
- Lead the school’s universal screening efforts to identify students in need of Tier 3 intensive interventions before they fail
- Lead the school’s efforts at Tier 1 for school-wide behavior expectations, including attendance policies and awards and recognitions (the team may create a separate behavior team to oversee these behavioral policies)
- Ensure all students have access to grade-level core instruction
- Ensure that sufficient, effective resources are available to provide Tier 2

From *Simplifying Response to Intervention: Four Essential Guiding Principles.*
interventions for students in need of supplemental support in motivation, attendance, and behavior

- Ensure that sufficient, effective resources are available to provide Tier 3 interventions for students in need of intensive support in the universal skills of reading, writing, number sense, English language, motivation, attendance, and behavior
- Continually monitor school wide evidence of student learning

**School Intervention Team**

While the school leadership team takes the broader, macro view of the school’s efforts to ensure high levels of learning for every child, the primary responsibility of the school intervention team is to lead the school’s focused micro view on the specific students in need of Tier 3 intensive support. Students in need of intensive support most often struggle due to:

- Significant weaknesses in the foundational skills of reading, writing, number sense, and/or English language
- Chronic and excessive absenteeism
- Severe behavior and/or motivational concerns
- Combinations of all these factors

Because the obstacles facing these students are often systemic and profound, meeting their needs will usually require multiple interventions, embedded within the instructional day and administered by highly trained professionals. It is unlikely an individual teacher or teacher team will have the diverse expertise and resources to best diagnose the needs of a student needing this level of help, nor would a teacher team have the authority to assign school wide resources (school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, counselor, specialists, and special education teacher) needed to provide intensive interventions.

The primary purpose of an intervention team is not to be the gatekeeper to special education testing—it is to focus intensely on the individual needs of a school’s most at-risk students. Consequently, the primary responsibilities of the site intervention team are to:

- Determine the specific learning needs of each student in need of intensive support
- Diagnose the cause(s) of the student’s struggles in Tier 1 and Tier 2
- Determine the most appropriate intervention(s) to address the student’s needs
- Frequently monitor the student’s progress to see if interventions are achieving the desired outcomes
- Revise the student’s intervention(s) when they are not achieving the desired outcomes
- Determine when special education identification is appropriate

Figure 1.3: Team responsibilities in the inverted RTI pyramid.

**Tier 1**
Effective Core Instruction for All Students

**Tier 2**
Supplemental Interventions for Some Identified Students

**Tier 3**
Intensive Interventions for Individual Students

- **Interventions Led by Schoolwide Teams**
  - Tiers 1 & 2
    - Students with motivational issues
    - Students with attendance issues
    - Students with behavior issues
  - Tier 3
    - Students in need of intensive remedial support in universal skills: reading, writing, number sense, English language, attendance, and behavior

- **Interventions Led by Collaborative Teacher Teams**
  - Tiers 1 & 2
    - Students in need of supplemental support in learning essential core standards and English language
Getting Started With RTI

This activity is designed to help a school leadership team and/or teacher team assess the school’s current reality on the essential elements of an effective RTI program, set a long-term vision, and identify specific steps to achieve the school’s goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Our Current Reality</th>
<th>Desired Reality</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective Responsibility</td>
<td>Do we believe all students can learn at high levels? Will we take responsibility to make this a reality?</td>
<td>Do we have frequent (weekly) collaborative time embedded during our professional day? Are our teacher teams formed around shared student learning outcomes? Have we identified team norms? Do we hold each other accountable for following norms?</td>
<td>Have we created a school leadership team? Is there representation of every teacher on the leadership team? Have we created a school intervention team? Do our schoolwide teams meet frequently? Have our schoolwide teams identified norms? Do members hold each other accountable for following norms?</td>
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</table>

Creating Teacher Teams

Creating Schoolwide Teams
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Our Current Reality</th>
<th>Desired Reality</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentrated Instruction</strong></td>
<td>Have we clearly defined the essential learning outcomes that our students must master for success in the next course/grade level? Do all students have access to grade-level essential standards?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convergent Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Have we created common assessments that measure student mastery of each essential standard? Do we compare results to identify the most effective teaching strategies? Do we use this information to guide our interventions?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Certain Access</strong></td>
<td>Do we have frequent time, during the school day, to reteach and enrich students? Do we have a process to frequently identify students for additional time and support?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Building a School Leadership Team

This activity is designed to help a principal or administrative team create an effective school leadership team.

First, list the names of the current members of what you might consider to be your guiding coalition. If no such group currently exists, list the potential members who come to mind.

Then consider the following personal characteristics that will impact your team’s success. Write the name of each team member under any characteristic that applies (a person may be listed under more than one). Eliminate any person from your list who possesses none of these characteristics. Note that it is recommended that a member of each teacher team be on the leadership team. Does your team have the necessary balance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Power</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
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Ask: Are enough key players on board so that those left out cannot easily block progress?

Ask: Are the various points of view—in terms of discipline, work experience, and so on—relevant to the task at hand adequately represented so that informed, intelligent decisions will be made?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Credibility</strong></th>
<th><strong>Leadership</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask: Does the group have enough people with good reputations that its recommendations and decisions will be taken seriously?</td>
<td>Ask: Does the group include enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating Consensus for a Culture of Collective Responsibility

A culture of collective responsibility is based on two fundamental beliefs:

1. The first assumption is that we, as educators, must accept responsibility to ensure high levels of learning for every child. While parental, societal, and economic forces impact student learning, the actions of the educators will ultimately determine each child’s success in school.

2. The second assumption is that all students can learn at high levels. We define “high” levels of learning as “high school plus,” meaning every child will graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge required to continue to learn. To compete in the global marketplace of the 21st century, students must continue to learn beyond high school, and there are many paths for that learning, including trade schools, internships, community colleges, and universities.

Discussing the following critical questions will assist a school leadership team in creating consensus for a culture of collective responsibility aligned with these beliefs.

1. **How will we provide a compelling case for change?** For someone to change, they first must see a compelling reason to change. In other words, one must show why there is a need to change. Raising test scores and/or meeting district/state/federal mandates hardly meets this goal. Instead, look to paint a picture of what adulthood will likely look like for students who don’t succeed in school.

2. **What must we do differently?** Besides a compelling reason to change, one must also provide a “doable” plan. The noblest cause is useless if the changes required are seen as unrealistic. Staff members want a clear picture of exactly what changes are necessary to achieve learning for all students.

3. **How do we know these changes will work?** Having experienced the pendulum of school change for the past decades, many educators are skeptical of change processes. What evidence is available to demonstrate the validity of the recommended changes? (Besides the research quoted in *Simplifying Response to Intervention*, the website allthingsplc.info has dozens of schools and hundreds of pages of research validating the elements of professional learning communities [PLCs] and RTI.)
4. **What concerns do we expect, especially from staff members traditionally against change?** The leadership team should brainstorm the concerns staff members will have regarding the recommended changes. What will be the leadership’s response to these concerns?

5. **What is the best setting and/or structure for the conversation(s) needed to create consensus?** One of the leadership team’s greatest leverage points is its ability to determine the location, structure, and timing of the conversation(s) to create staff consensus. All stakeholders must have a voice in the process, but not necessarily in the same meeting. Sometimes the feelings of the silent majority can be drowned out by the aggressive opinions of a loud minority resistant to change. Consider a series of meetings with teams, grade levels, or departments. Also, set clear norms for the meeting, as professional, respectful dialogue is essential.

6. **How will we know if we have reached consensus?** Remember, it does not take 100 percent approval to get started; it takes consensus. Consensus is reached when all stakeholders have had a say and the will of the group has emerged and is evident, even to those who disagree (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, *Learning by Doing*, 2010). Consider how many key people will be needed to create the tipping point necessary for consensus.

In the end, true commitment comes when people see that the changes work. So the key is to build consensus, then get started doing the work. You will never get commitment until you start doing the work, but you cannot start until you get consensus.
Team Foundations

Team Members:

Our Norms:

We commit to reviewing these norms at every meeting, revising them as needed, and holding each other accountable for following them.

When Norms Are Broken, We Will:
Our Meeting Schedule:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Place:</th>
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Teams work toward common goals. Our goals to improve student learning are:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Results-oriented**
- **Time-bound**
Essential Standards Chart: What is it we expect students to learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>Subject:</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Team Members:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Standard Description</th>
<th>Example Rigor</th>
<th>Prerequisite Skills</th>
<th>Common Assessment</th>
<th>When Taught?</th>
<th>Extension Standards</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the essential standard to be learned? Describe in student-friendly vocabulary.</td>
<td>What does proficient student work look like? Provide an example and/or description.</td>
<td>What prior knowledge, skills, and/or vocabulary is/are needed for a student to master this standard?</td>
<td>What assessment(s) will be used to measure student mastery?</td>
<td>When will this standard be taught?</td>
<td>What will we do when students have learned the essential standard(s)?</td>
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Buffum/Mattos/Weber, 2011
Common Assessment Team Protocol

This protocol is designed to help a teacher team quickly and efficiently discuss a common assessment. If each teacher reviews his or her own assessment data prior to the team meeting, then the team should be able to collectively complete this activity within a typical team meeting of forty-five to sixty minutes.

1. Which specific students did not demonstrate mastery on which specific standards? (Respond by the student, by the standard)

2. Which instructional practices proved to be most effective?

3. What patterns can we identify from the student mistakes?

4. How can we improve this assessment?

5. What interventions are needed to provide failed students additional time and support?

6. How will we extend learning for students who have mastered the standard(s)?
Teaching Cycle Planning Calendar

Essential standard(s) that all students must learn:

Learning targets to be shared with students:

Use the planning calendar to schedule the following:

1. When will we start the unit of study? How will we share the learning target(s) with the students? When will each target be introduced?

2. When will our team meeting(s) during the unit of study be held? When are intervention/extension times available?

3. When are good points during the unit of study to collect evidence of student learning? How and when will we give common formative assessment(s)?

4. When will we collectively analyze the common formative assessment data?

5. When will we reteach students who do not demonstrate mastery of the learning targets on the common formative assessment(s)?

6. When and how will we provide extension and enrichment to those who demonstrate mastery on the common formative assessment(s)?

7. When will we give the end-of-unit common assessment?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
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Designing a System of Interventions

This activity will assist a leadership team in designing a schoolwide system of interventions. Using the inverted pyramid graphic, consider the following questions, and fill in the boxed sections as appropriate.

1. Universal Screening
   + How will we identify students in need of intensive interventions before they start to fail? (See Universal Screening Planning Guide, page 113, to assist with this step.)

2. Tier 1 Core Program
   + Have our teacher teams identified essential standards by grade, subject, and/or course?
   + Does every student have access to grade-level essential standards?
   + Is flexible time embedded in Tier 1 to provide differentiated instruction and additional time embedded to meet the individual needs of students?
   + Have we clearly defined the positive behaviors (effort, attendance, social behaviors) that we want all students to demonstrate? Is there a plan to teach, reward, and support these behaviors?
   + How will we measure student progress toward meeting these academic and behavior expectations?

3. Certain Access: Tier 1 to Tier 2
   + How will we systematically identify students who need additional help after core instruction? (See chapter 7 for ideas.)
   + Is every teacher involved in this process?
   + Is this process frequent?
   + What criteria will we use to identify students in need of supplemental support?

4. Tier 2 Supplemental Program
   + What supplemental interventions are currently available at our school? What is needed?
   + Which interventions will be led by teacher teams? (Failed learners)
   + Which interventions will be led by schoolwide intervention resources? (Motivation, attendance, behavior)
5. Certain Access: Tier 2 to Tier 3
   + How will we systematically identify students who need intensive support? (See chapter 7 for ideas.)
   + Do we have a school intervention team to lead Tier 3 Interventions? (See chapter 3.)
   + Is this process frequent?
   + What criteria will we use to identify students in need of supplemental support?

6. Tier 3 Intensive Program
   + What intensive interventions are currently available at our school? What is needed?
   + How can we best utilize schoolwide resources to support Tier 3 interventions?
   + How will we monitor student progress?

7. Special Education Identification
   + How will the intervention team determine if special education is necessary, appropriate, and defendable for a student? (See Essential Questions for Special Education Identification, page 198.)
Essential Questions for Special Education Identification

These questions are designed to help a site intervention team consider if special education identification is appropriate, justified, and defendable for a student. Unless the intervention team can answer each question affirmatively, then the decision to recommend special education is not appropriate or defendable.

Tier 1:
- Did the student have access to rigorous, grade-level curriculum?
- What evidence do we have that our school’s initial instruction (Tier I) was effective for similar students?
- Was the student given additional time and differentiated instruction during Tier I instruction?

Tier 2:
- Did we identify the student for supplemental time and support in a timely manner?
- What were the child’s specific learning needs?
- What was the cause of the student’s struggles?
- What research-based interventions were used to address the student’s specific learning needs?
- What evidence do we have that these interventions were effective for similar students?

Tier 3:
- When was the child referred for intensive support?
- What quality problem-solving process was used to better identify the child’s specific learning needs and the cause(s) of the student’s struggles?
- What research-based interventions were used to address the student’s specific learning needs?
- What evidence do we have that these interventions were effective for students with similar needs?
- Are there any other intervention or supports that can or should be tried before considering special education placement?
- Do we have agreement among the intervention team that special education is necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of this child? Is this decision defensible?
## Additional Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Resource</th>
<th>URL or Author(s) and Publisher</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIMSWeb</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aimsweb.com">www.aimsweb.com</a></td>
<td>This site offers full-service CBMs, for a price.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center on Instruction</td>
<td><a href="http://www.centeroninstruction.org">www.centeroninstruction.org</a></td>
<td>The site provides the best research and meta-analyses in the areas of reading, math, science, special education, and English language learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom</td>
<td>Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007</td>
<td>Instruction and assessment must become fluid companions. Instruction, whether at Tier 1, 2, or 3, must be frequently informed by informal assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement</td>
<td>Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001</td>
<td>Marzano et al. consistently deliver the very best research-based practices to inform our practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Exceptional Children</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cec.sped.org">www.cec.sped.org</a></td>
<td>This site provides invaluable information from a preeminent advocacy group for students with special needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Self-Regulated Learners: Beyond Achievement to Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>Barry J. Zimmerman, Sebastian Bonner, and Robert Kovach American Psychological Association, 1996</td>
<td>Ultimately, we want our students to self-monitor and be self-motivated. This book will explain how to help students truly become lifelong learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Resource</td>
<td>URL or Author(s) and Publisher</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIBELS</td>
<td><a href="https://dibels.uoregon.edu">https://dibels.uoregon.edu</a></td>
<td>This site provides access to excellent research in the area of literacy and access to exceptional, free reading CBMs for grades preK–6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Differentiated Classroom:</strong> Responding to the Needs of All Learners</td>
<td>Carol Ann Tomlinson Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999</td>
<td>The very first line of defense, and the most critical factor in RTI, is strengthening Tier 1 instruction, or “shoring up the core.” Differentiating instruction is non-negotiable, and Tomlinson is the source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easyCBM</td>
<td><a href="http://easyCBM.com">http://easyCBM.com</a></td>
<td>This site offers free CBMs for reading and mathematics for K–8; allows teachers to enter student names, print CBMs, enter data, and print reports; includes norms for each CBM; and allows students to take some tests online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Center for Reading Research</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fcrr.org">www.fcrr.org</a></td>
<td>This is an exceptional site for all things reading. In particular, it provides free, research-based activities for students in all five domains of reading and provides reviews of dozens of research-based, commercial reading interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Central</td>
<td><a href="http://www.interventioncentral.org">www.interventioncentral.org</a></td>
<td>This site is an exceptional resource for all things RTI, from generating and printing CBMs to finding resources to help monitor site RTI efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ldonline.org">www.ldonline.org</a></td>
<td>This site provides great information on learning disabilities and resources for support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Making Standards Work: How to Implement Standards-Based Assessments in the Classroom, School, and District</em> (3rd Edition)</td>
<td>Douglas B. Reeves Advanced Learning Press, 2001</td>
<td>Reeves’ work will help schools “concentrate” their instruction by analyzing the priority to be placed on standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Center on Response to Intervention</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rti4success.org">www.rti4success.org</a></td>
<td>This USDOE-sponsored site offers background and resources on RTI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Center on Student Progress Monitoring</td>
<td><a href="http://www.studentprogress.org">www.studentprogress.org</a></td>
<td>This USDOE-sponsored site offers background and resources on progress monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pbis.org">www.pbis.org</a></td>
<td>This USDOE-sponsored site is an absolute treasure trove of all things in the domain of behavioral RTI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Reading First Center</td>
<td><a href="http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu">http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu</a></td>
<td>This is an exceptional site with scholarly, cutting-edge research on reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Power Standards: Identifying the Standards That Matter the Most</em></td>
<td>Larry Ainsworth Advanced Learning Press, 2003</td>
<td>As the title implies, and like Reeves’ book, will help schools “concentrate” their instruction by analyzing the priority to be placed on standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Forum</td>
<td><a href="http://projectforum.org">http://projectforum.org</a></td>
<td>This USDOE-sponsored site provides background on special education policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Rockets</td>
<td><a href="http://www.readingrockets.org">www.readingrockets.org</a></td>
<td>This site provides helpful information on reading for educators and parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Institute on Progress Monitoring</td>
<td><a href="http://www.progressmonitoring.org">www.progressmonitoring.org</a></td>
<td>This site provides background and research resources in the area of progress monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI Action Network</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rtinetwork.org">www.rtinetwork.org</a></td>
<td>This site is a helpful resource for educators and families and includes an extensive list of FAQs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners</em></td>
<td>Carol Ann Tomlinson Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999</td>
<td>The very first line of defense, and the most critical factor in RTI, is strengthening Tier 1 instruction, or “shoring up the core.” Differentiating instruction is a non-negotiable, and Tomlinson is the source.</td>
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<td>Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts</td>
<td><a href="http://www.meadowscenter.org/vgc">www.meadowscenter.org/vgc</a></td>
<td>This is one of finest centers for reading resources, particularly for English learners and students with special needs.</td>
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