

CLD Corner: Q&A for the CLD Experts

The CLD Corner is a regular column written by members of the TSHA Task Force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD).

The CLD Corner was created in an effort to respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity. Questions are answered by members of the TSHA Task Force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD). Members for the 2008-2009 year include **Ellen Stubbe Kester** (co-chair), **Lynette Austin**, **Gina Glover** (co-chair), **Katsura Aoyama**, **Nelcy L. Cardenas**, **Catherine Carrasco-Lynch**, **Benigno Valles**, **Julia Peña**, and **Jacqueline Lopez**. Submit your questions to ginamglover@yahoo.com. Look for responses from the CLD Task Force on TSHA's website and in the *Communicologist*.

The CLD Task Force is now offering half- and full-day trainings for school districts, education service centers, university programs, and other agencies on **Assessment and Intervention with CLD Populations**. For information, contact Gina Glover at ginamglover@yahoo.com.

Response to Intervention, Speech Services, and Students from CLD Backgrounds—What do YOU think?

Across Texas and the nation, a new way of thinking about assessment is changing how and when students are identified as requiring or qualifying for special education services. Labeled "Response to Intervention" or RTI, the procedure is a complex process generally carried out within the regular education program. The notion of employing RTI as a means for determining whether or not a child is experiencing learning difficulties emerged from a statement appearing in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004 (IDEA 2004). Staskowski (2006) notes "the law simply states (in Section 614, 6 (a)) that schools may employ a process to 'decide whether a child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures'" (p. 10). This methodology indicates that students who demonstrate slower learning trajectories or inefficient learning patterns are likely candidates for special education intervention. A very significant element of the RTI process is the application of "research-based interventions" to children's learning needs. Children in the RTI process who continue to struggle after application of high quality instruction and/or interventions (at graduated levels of intensity) are likely to be referred for special education assessment and intervention (Staskowski, 2006). RTI is intended to differentiate these children from students who, for reasons other than a disabling condition, start the learning process at lower levels than others their age (but are still capable learners). Ideally, such students would not be identified as disabled when the RTI process reveals this competence.

One area in which RTI methodologies have been widely employed in reading. Struggling readers who would previously have been assessed for potential learning disabilities (LD) are now undergoing RTI processes prior to or instead of being identified

as LD in reading. Proponents feel that utilizing RTI in this manner decreases over-identification of LD (Frieberg, 2006).

A more recent development has been the implementation of RTI processes within the areas of speech and language. Schussler (2008) provides a brief description of a program wherein students who fail a speech/language screening due to problems with language, voice, articulation, or fluency participate in a 5-session RTI protocol. Following implementation, the RTI team reviews progress made and determines future actions. Schussler describes the example of a kindergarten student with mild articulation errors who was noted during RTI to be very stimutable for correct production of target phonemes. In this case the student would be monitored for age-appropriate development following RTI, but no further intervention would be recommended at that time. Reports of similar programs are surfacing at conventions, conferences, and in journals (Kuhn, 2006; Taps, 2008).

Of interest in this column is the effect that RTI processes may have on identification and service delivery to students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. In discussing the use of RTI in addressing academic concerns, Xu and Drame (2008) note that CLD individuals have historically been over-represented in special education programs, citing studies finding that English Language Learners (ELL) in the elementary grades were 27% more likely to be placed in special education programs than their peers from the majority culture. The question then arises: How is RTI impacting instruction of CLD students in the regular education program? Are CLD students who are struggling academically more likely to remain within the general education program because of RTI?

Little has been published to date regarding the effects of RTI programming on struggling readers who are CLD. We are aware of one study which addresses this question; Kamps et al. (2007) examined outcomes for CLD students enrolled in a variety of different reading interventions during an RTI process. The study reported positive effects for direct, research-based reading instruction focusing on phonological and phonemic awareness and fluency building (Kamps, et al. 2007). In this study, a large percentage of struggling CLD readers (first/second graders) responded with significant gains to instruction offered via the RTI program. Presumably, these students were not referred for special education assessment, although this final outcome was unclear.

What about RTI and speech therapy for CLD students? Are SLPs seeing positive, negative, or no effects of RTI on their service delivery to this group of children? Taps (2008) suggests that because of an RTI articulation program in place in a California school district, SLPs in that area are receiving fewer inappropriate referrals for articulation assessment for ELLs with dialectal variations. The article ties this referral decrease to staff training, which is a component of the RTI process.

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The CLD Task Force is extremely interested in the observations and comments of SLPs throughout the state on this topic. In addition to the general questions posed above, more specific questions of interest include: In Texas, are referrals for assessment of CLD students decreasing as a result of speech RTI programs? Is assessment or service delivery being delayed or denied for students who should be referred? A Round Table discussion was held at the 2009 Convention in Austin. We will compile a report on what we discovered about the impact of speech RTI programs on CLD students in Texas schools. Please share your insights so that we may include them.

References

- Friberg, C. (2006). Response to intervention: An overview. *Perspectives on School-Based Issues*, 7 (3), 3.
- Kuhn, D. (2006). Speedy speech: Efficient service delivery for articulation errors. *Perspectives on School-Based Issues*, 7 (4), 11 – 14.
- Kamps, D., Abbott, M., Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, C., Wills, H., Longstaff, J., et al. (2007). Use of evidence-based, small-group reading instruction for English language learners in elementary grades: Secondary-tier intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30, 153 – 168.
- Schussler, K. (2008). Response to intervention: My perspective. *Perspectives on School-Based Issues* 9 (3), 111-115.
- Staskowski, M. (2006). Response to intervention: A new system for prevention and identification. *Perspectives on School-Based Issues*, 7 (3), 10 – 15.
- Taps, J. (2008). RTI services for children with mild articulation needs: Four years of data. *Perspectives on School-Based Issues*, 9 (3), 104-110.
- Xu, Y. & Drame, E. (2008). Culturally appropriate context: Unlocking the potential of Response to Intervention for English language learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35, 305 – 311.

Task Force Favorites

Task Force Member/Co-Chair Ellen Kester asked her staff of bilingual SLPs what materials or resources they loved to use with their CLD clients. Here are some of their favorites:

Adult Language-TBI

VISUALIZING AND VERBALIZING
NANCI BELL

Categorization

VOCAB-U-THEMES
SUPER DUPER
"WH" QUESTIONS
"WH" QUESTIONS SCENES BOOK
SUPER DUPER

Sequencing

SEQUENCING STORIES IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH
COMMUNICATION SKILL BUILDERS

Fluency

www.stutteringhelp.org

Augmentative Communication

TRACY CUSTER AT PRENTKE ROMICH COMPANY
1(800)262-1984

Uncommon Disorders

HEGDE'S POCKET GUIDE TO TREATMENTS IN SLP
M.D. HEGDE

Articulation Data and Homework

TEACHING SPANISH SOUNDS
ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATES

We Want To Hear From You!

The CLD Task Force is asking for your thoughts and experiences regarding this article as well as the November/December 2008 article on Bilingual Standards and Certifications. That article is available for review on the TSHA website under "Publications." Please send your comments to one of the co-chairs, Gina Glover (gina.glover@twisd.org) or Ellen Kester (Ellen.kester@bilinguistics.com).

Notice to all National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) Chapters in Texas:

Effective January 8, 2009, all NSSLHA chapters in Texas can order a mailing list from TSHA free of charge up to two times per year. If your chapter is going to sponsor a continuing education event and would like to notify TSHA members in a certain region or the entire state, contact Jennifer Hardina at jennifer.hardina@txsha.org to obtain a mailing list.