

# Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction for Students With Learning Disabilities

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## Abstract

As student populations are becoming more diverse in ability and ethnicity across American classrooms, teachers are faced with instructional challenges in meeting their students' learning needs. Challenges are heightened for general and special education teachers who teach students with learning disabilities (LD) and have a culturally and linguistically diverse background. This article analyzes three main domains of culturally responsive reading instruction for students with LD: (a) instructional delivery, (b) environmental support, and (c) curriculum context. Specific strategies and teaching tools are described in each domain to assist teachers in making their daily reading instruction more culturally responsive and relevant to the needs of their students.

## Keywords

cultural responsiveness, reading instruction, learning disabilities

Students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds have historically been overrepresented in special education programs (Klingner, Boelé, Linan-Thompson, & Rodriguez, 2014). Students from CLD backgrounds include students whose race and ethnicity differ from the traditional European-American group. They may come from low socioeconomic households and/or can be English language learners (ELL). Interestingly, students from CLD backgrounds have been disproportionately represented in certain disability categories (e.g., learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders). For instance, when looking at the 2013–2014 within-ethnic group data, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and American Indian/Alaska Native Americans have more than 40% of students identified with learning disabilities (LD) compared to being identified in other disability categories. Of note, students with LD account for over one-third (i.e., 35%) of children and youth ages 3 to 21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990), thus making LD the largest disability category in special education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015).

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), school districts are now asked to implement a three-tiered

paradigm, Response to Intervention (RTI), to identify students with possible LD. This new framework has been suggested to have powerful implications for students from CLD backgrounds and the type/quality of instruction they possibly could receive (Cartledge, Kea, Watson, & Oif, 2016; Klingner & Edwards, 2006). Ethnically diverse students at risk for LD may now receive layered instructional support early on while students from CLD backgrounds with identified LD are to receive intensive support from special and general education teachers. Various RTI models have been implemented over time across the country, and some researchers found decreases in the percentages of students from CLD backgrounds identified for LD (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007), whereas others did not find significant changes in the proportion of students from CLD backgrounds identified with LD over time

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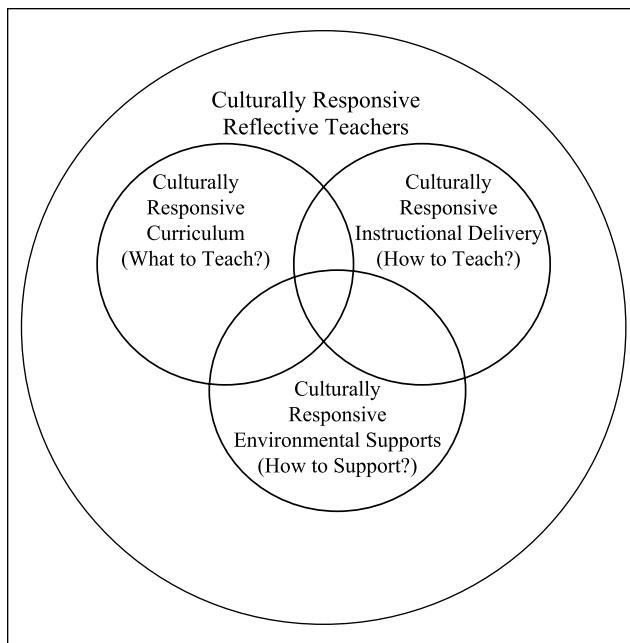
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(O'Connor, Bocian, Beach, Sanchez, & Flynn, 2013). However, a consistent finding among researchers is that the implementation of RTI reduced disproportionate representation of minority students. Interestingly, O'Connor et al. (2013) noted that most of the referrals and placements in special education involved students in Grades 3 and 4. Teachers tended to avoid referring young (K-) ELL students for LD evaluation probably because of sensitivity to the students' language. As a result, ELL youngsters were underidentified and less likely to receive special education services early on (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higuera, 2005). When ELL students would move on to upper elementary and middle school, they would be more likely to be overrepresented in special education (O'Connor, Bocian, Sanchez, & Beach, 2014). Additionally, Carta et al. (2015) found in their study that 30% to 35% of preschool students, of whom the majority were ELL and low-income students, had been identified for secondary and tertiary interventions whereas RTI models suggest a theoretical 20% of students needing additional instructional services. Within the realm of their research evidence, this article addresses both issues by proposing a theoretical model for a strong Tier 1 implementation in which culturally responsive pedagogy and evidence-based practices are at the heart of an effective instruction for students from CLD backgrounds (Esparza Brown & Doolittle, 2008; Thorius & Sullivan, 2013).

The fundamental principle underlying the RTI model is that instructional practices and interventions provided to students should be based on scientific evidence. However, authorities in the areas of culturally responsive pedagogy and special education contend that evidence-based instruction is not sufficient to produce desired outcomes for students from CLD backgrounds. Researchers argued that scientifically based instruction should be matched to the cultural styles of the students (Klingner & Edwards, 2006). The reading success of ethnically diverse students depends on how well teachers integrate evidence-based reading instruction with students' cultural and linguistic needs (Gay, 2002; Klingner et al., 2014; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). This article, as noted in Figure 1, outlines the basic instructional elements for a culturally responsive reading instruction for students from CLD backgrounds with LD.

As Figure 1 presents, culturally responsive reading instruction should be carefully designed and delivered by general and special educators who have developed culturally responsive attributes (Gay, 2002). Within this teacher competency framework, an effective and appropriate instruction should provide equitable learning opportunities for all students by applying teaching methods and techniques across three pedagogical domains: (a) creating culturally responsive curriculum content (What to teach?), (b) following a culturally responsive instructional delivery (How to teach?), and (c) utilizing culturally relevant environmental supports (How to support?). Educators may consider the following



**Figure 1.** Elements of culturally responsive reading instruction for students with learning disabilities.

preparation checklist (see Figure 2) as they design their reading instruction in becoming more culturally relevant.

## Culturally Responsive and Reflective Educators

Culturally competent teachers reflect on their own cultural backgrounds and are intentional in understanding the culture of their students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Teachers express a genuine interest in learning about their students' family makeup, customs and traditions, strengths and difficulties. Learning about their students' past experiences in and outside of school helps build relationships and increases teachers' use of these experiences during instructional time. Consider the following vignette (see Note 1):

Rudy is 8 years old and attends third grade. She left Somalia with her mother and her three siblings 6 years ago when Somalian rebels captured their father. Rudy and her family sought political asylum in the United States of America due to ethnic conflicts in their country. Rudy spoke little English upon entering kindergarten. By third grade, Rudy was diagnosed with a learning disability and had started receiving services for English as a second language. She attends most of her time in a general education classroom. Ms. Jones, her current third-grade teacher, spoke with Rudy's mother with the help of an official translator to obtain information about their family history. At the same time the classroom teacher would spend time observing Rudy's social interactions during classroom activities and recess time. Ms. Jones would take notes, reflecting on her own

Description	Level of Implementation		
	Initial	Middle	Achieved
<i>Teacher Cultural Competency</i>			
Explore and identify main features of my culture (beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, traditions)			
Obtain information (beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, traditions) about my student's culture from family/ community members at the beginning of school year			
Search, find and read information about my student's culture			
Observe my student's social interactions and behaviors inside and outside of classroom throughout the school year			
Keep journal of my student observations throughout the school year			
Share observations and reflections with teacher mentor on a monthly basis			
Attend professional development trainings on cultural responsive pedagogy practices			
Determine and evaluate course of cultural approach with students			
<i>Culturally Responsive Curriculum Content (What to Teach?) and Instructional Delivery (How to Teach?)</i>			
Determine literature to target identified student needs			
Incorporate topics from student cultures during journal writing activities			
Utilize explicit instruction during reading instruction			
Provide opportunities to respond during whole classroom instruction			
Provide positive and specific feedback to student responses (4 to 1)			
Provide immediate error correction			
Incorporate group-based teaching formats during the week (peer tutoring, collaborative learning)			
<i>Culturally Responsive Environmental Supports (How to Support?)</i>			
Implement a classwide token economy system			
Incorporate technology-based materials during the week			
Use pre-printed and/or write-on response cards			
Use guided notes during lecture			

**Figure 2.** Teacher monitoring checklist for designing culturally responsive reading instruction.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is my definition about culture and diversity?</li> <li>2. What are the main characteristics of my own culture?</li> <li>3. Do I know about my CLD students' cultural heritage and family history? Where and how can I learn about it?</li> <li>4. How does my culture differ from my students' culture(s)?</li> <li>5. How do my CLD students communicate their needs in the classroom? What verbal and non-verbal behaviors do they exhibit for communication?</li> <li>6. Do I <i>really</i> understand my CLD students' communication efforts inside and outside of classroom?</li> <li>7. To what extent are my CLD students responsive to my instruction? How can I increase their responsiveness during lesson?</li> <li>8. What information may I include from my students' cultural background into my teachings?</li> </ol> |
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**Figure 3.** Questions cultivating teacher self-reflection on cultural competency.

feelings and thoughts about Rudy's social and academic performance in class. Ms. Jones had the opportunity to share her observations and interpretations with a teacher mentor during professional learning community (PLC) meetings.

This example is an illustration of teacher efforts for developing awareness of her student's family background and understanding of student's socialization at school. Developing teacher cultural competency requires a systematic information gathering and reflection process enhanced

by in-service professional development trainings and teacher support (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Possible questions teachers may consider using to reflect on their cultural competency are in Figure 3. As noted in Rudy's example, teachers may seek information about their student's cultural background in several ways, such as student observations and discussions with teacher mentors, visiting a student's community and interacting with community members, inviting family and/or community members to school, using ethnographic interviewing techniques to acquire better

understanding of family's culture (Kourea, Lo, & Owens, 2016), reading about student's culture, and exercising mindfulness (Dray & Basler Wisneski, 2011).

## **Culturally Responsive Curriculum Content: What to Teach?**

### *Reading*

Within the RTI framework, Tier 1 is the primary level of prevention, and it denotes the general education core classroom instruction delivered to all students. Making core classroom instruction as effective as possible not only minimizes the number of students needing additional intervention but also reduces the overidentification of students from CLD backgrounds for referrals to special education (Foorman, Carlson, & Santi, 2007). Effective core reading instruction provides explicit emphasis on key reading components such as phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). A scientifically based core curriculum incorporates all five reading components in a conspicuous and logical instructional sequence. For students in lower grades, research has documented the positive outcomes of phonological awareness training on the basic reading skills of at-risk students (Bursuck et al., 2004; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). More recently, systematic efforts have been tailored toward incorporating vocabulary instruction utilizing graphic organizers, word reviews, charts, and strategy instruction for young readers (Taylor, Mraz, Nichols, Rickelman, & Wood, 2009; Zipoli, Coyne, & McCoach, 2011).

Although extensive emphasis has been placed on teaching young students basic literacy skills, when students from CLD backgrounds proceed to upper grades, several of them continue to face challenges in acquiring and comprehending academic content. Research evidence on teaching adolescents specific academic content has shown that classroom instruction should incorporate direct vocabulary instruction, metacognitive strategies (i.e., morphological awareness), comprehension canopy, and team-based learning (August, Carlo, Dessler, & Snow, 2005; Lesaux, Kieffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014; Vaughn et al., 2017).

Research has shown that using multicultural literature during reading instruction has positive impact on students' reading skills (Cartledge, Keeseey, Bennett, Ramnath, & Council, 2016) as well as (a) boosting student self-esteem and pride, especially when students from CLD backgrounds see characters from their heritage depicted positively; (b) highlighting the reading value of stories from diverse cultures; and (c) promoting and articulating the benefits of cultural diversity in classrooms, thus potentially minimizing any prejudices toward ethnic minorities (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2001). Multicultural literature can be used in a thematic approach (Wan, 2006)

following these steps: (a) Identify children's storybooks with common themes (holiday celebrations, family traditions, folktales, values, emotions), (b) select one theme (e.g., family tradition) that can be of interest to the majority of students regardless of background, and (c) carefully choose reading materials and activities to present the story and the common theme addressed. Teachers may utilize components of instructional delivery presented in the next section. An example of how to employ a thematic approach to literacy is using multicultural Cinderella stories (Northrup, 2000), where common themes are addressed across cultures. For further information, readers may visit the instructional guidelines provided by the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (Esparza Brown & Doolittle, 2008).

### *Writing*

Meaningful writing increases student motivation and engagement in the writing process. Tatum and Gue (2012) suggested that students from CLD backgrounds can become motivated and engaged in the writing process when topics tap into their histories and cultures. For instance, teachers have long used personal narratives as a strategy for teaching writing and encouraging self-expression. However, when working in a culturally diverse classroom, asking students to detail their personal lives in writing can be challenging (Laidlaw & Wong, 2013), and it requires a sensitive approach on the teacher's end. In our student's example, Rudy might not feel comfortable describing her family's history escaping from Somalian rebels. Hence, teachers need to exercise careful attention to sensitive issues of students from CLD backgrounds. Some of these issues could be identified early on, when teachers conduct assessment of students' cultural background. In a qualitative study that examined reflections of college students from CLD backgrounds concerning their experiences with writing personal narratives in high school, Laidlaw and Wong (2013) found recurring sentiments on issues that presented challenges for CLD students. The sentiments revolved around topics such as holiday celebrations, family traditions, religious beliefs, and family structure. Participants shared that assignments on these topics focused on the dominant culture (White) and neglected other cultures from which CLD students came. For example, personal narratives asking CLD students to write about receiving Christmas gifts or having a Thanksgiving dinner could essentially be insensitive to some CLD students. Hence, a suggested writing alternative would be for teachers to provide inclusive space to all students by encouraging collaborative writing. During this group activity, students can take turns and contribute to the process without the pressure of having to relay their personal experiences, which may be at a stark contrast to the traditional European-American practices.

## Culturally Responsive Instructional Delivery

### Explicit Instruction

Diverse learners with LD due to cognitive difficulties in memory, attention, and processing areas benefit from explicit instruction in reading (Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, & Francis, 2005). Explicit instruction includes manipulating one or more aspects of instruction such as teacher modeling, increasing instructional intensity, providing examples students can relate to, providing definitions and guided practice, and delivering immediate feedback. One strategy that utilizes explicit instruction is called *model, lead, test* (Bechtolt, McLaughlin, Derby, & Blecher, 2014; Bulkley, McLaughlin, Neyman, & Carosella, 2012). To illustrate this strategy, consider the following example from Rudy's class:

Teacher: In our story, we read the word "enable" [Teacher writes the word on the board].

Teacher: This word is e-na-ble [Teacher points and models reading]. Say the word with me on my cue.

Students: E-na-ble [Teacher reads along with students].

Teacher: Yes! The word is enable [Teacher gives immediate feedback]. Now, say the word fast [Teacher cues students to respond chorally].

Students: Enable.

Teacher: That's right!

Students from CLD backgrounds need clear skill demonstrations and guided practice until they can perform the skill independently (Vaughn et al., 2005). Skills are taught with repetition until they become established in the reader's repertoire. Research in reading points out that the critical skills needed to become proficient readers include phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (Coyne, Kame'enui, & Carnine, 2011). During reading acquisition, teachers should maximize student responsiveness by presenting examples connected to their students' lives. Teachers may provide short descriptions of unknown words using students' social experiences (e.g., "Enable means make possible. Good weather enables us to play outside. Good weather makes it possible for us to play outside."). Note that these skills should be accurately assessed and continually monitored to ensure the right intensity of instruction is being provided for improvement.

### Teaching Arrangement

**Small group instruction.** Instruction in same-ability groups of three to six students aims to target specific reading skills.

This type of instruction is also referred to as *tiered instruction* and can be used as part of the RTI approach. That is, students who may not respond to whole classroom instruction may receive additional small group teaching on certain skills during the school day. Various research studies demonstrated that when students from CLD backgrounds are provided reading instruction in small groups, their reading skills are strengthened (Kamps et al., 2007; Lonigan & Philips, 2016). For instance, Kamps et al. (2007), utilizing small group explicit instruction with ELL students, found that their intervention group outperformed students in the comparison group. In a different study, Lonigan and Philips (2016) implemented small group instruction within an RTI model to support at-risk students, of whom the majority (60%) were African American males. Hence, researchers provided an additional instructional layer targeting language and phonological skills in small groups. These study results support the use of small group reading instruction for students from CLD backgrounds.

**Cooperative learning groups.** The premise of cooperative learning is that a teacher assigns students in heterogeneous groups based on ability, gender, and ethnicity to work collaboratively on specific reading tasks. Group members work together to accomplish an assigned task, and throughout the process, they teach each other the required skills. Some examples of cooperative learning strategies include *Jig-Saw* and *Think-Pair-Share*. Cooperative learning may be appealing for students from CLD backgrounds because of the social context in which learning occurs and the increased opportunities to practice oral language skills through group interactions (Bui & Fagan, 2013). In this group format, teachers should assign distinct roles among students and monitor and encourage students' equal and meaningful participation during activities. If this group format is not implemented correctly, then teachers might run the risk of having some students become passive participants and be excluded from the process.

**Peer tutoring.** Peer tutoring is a structured instructional format, which involves pairing students to teach each other selected topics. Several research-based peer tutoring models have been investigated to determine their effectiveness on low-performing diverse students. One type of peer tutoring is the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). In the PALS model, students with higher skill levels are paired with lower performing students in dyads and take turns being tutors. Each member of the dyad takes turns modeling the target skills and providing corrective feedback and reinforcement to their partner. Research on PALS demonstrates its effectiveness across students from various ages, grades, and ethnic backgrounds (Calhoun, Al Otaiba, Greenberg, King, & Avalos, 2006; Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). For example, Saenz et al. (2005) worked with students with LD

in Grades 3 through 6 who had been randomly assigned to either the PALS group or a contrast group. Students in the PALS group participated in the peer tutoring system three times a week for 15 weeks. The results of this study indicated that the PALS students outperformed the comparison group on reading comprehension measures. Taken as a whole, peer tutoring can be an effective strategy for many different types of students but might be particularly helpful to improve the reading skills of struggling CLD learners due to the structured and explicit instruction format enhanced in the instructional setup.

### **Performance Feedback**

Providing corrective feedback is an essential part of the learning process. In order to learn foundational reading skills, students need to be engaged with the material, have an opportunity to practice the desired skills, and receive feedback on their performance. Some approaches to teaching reading skills involve the limited number of errors that are made during practice. If error patterns are identified and corrected early in the process, the likelihood of them becoming engrained can be diminished. Error correction procedure entails a teacher stopping the student, identifying the error, modeling the correct response, and then having the student practice the skill again. Performance feedback can be effectively used during guided and small group reading instruction (Mostow, Nelson-Taylor, & Beck, 2013; Reutzel, Child, Jones, & Clark, 2014). Watson, Fore, and Boon (2009) compared two different methods of performance feedback on a small group of students from CLD backgrounds. The strategies included the use of either word-supply or phonics-based feedback when an error was made during oral reading practice. Students were instructed to read a passage out loud. In the word-supply condition, they were immediately stopped and provided with the correct word every time they made an error or did not know a word (i.e., made a pause for more than 3 seconds). The phonics-based feedback was identical to the previous with the exception of stopping and instructing students to sound out the word before continuing. The results of this study demonstrated that both feedback strategies were effective in reducing the number of errors, with the word-supply condition showing fewer errors for two of the three students.

### **Opportunities to Respond**

Response opportunities are critical during lesson instruction because they allow teachers to assess student acquisition. The more opportunities students have to engage in and practice targeted skills, the more fluent they become. The same holds true when teaching basic and advanced reading skills to struggling students. This being the case, teachers need to focus on increasing the number of response opportunities

that students have during instructional time. Research on increased opportunities to respond confirms that the more practice students have, the stronger their skills become (Begeny, Daly, & Valleley, 2006; Haydon, MacSuga, Simonsen, & Hawkins, 2012; Wanzek, Roberts, & Al Otaiba, 2014). One strategy that may be particularly effective in increasing the opportunities for students to respond is repeated readings. During repeated readings, students are instructed to read selected text passages out loud until they reach a mastery criterion. If an error is made, teacher provides corrective feedback and has students continue practicing until they achieve their goal (i.e., criterion). Repeated readings have been widely used to improve reading fluency for struggling learners, including students from CLD backgrounds (Gibson, Cartledge, Keyes, & Yawn, 2014).

### **Build Background Knowledge**

Students with robust background knowledge of a reading topic will have an easier time understanding text content. Background knowledge allows readers to figure out different meanings of words, make correct inferences from the text, and better interpret literacy language and informational text (Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2014). Acquiring the appropriate background knowledge to comprehend grade-level reading material largely depends on the experiences of individual students. This may be more difficult for students from CLD backgrounds (Burgoyne, Whiteley, & Hutchinson, 2013; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012). For these students, the teacher must assess their point of reference and cultural vantage point when attempting to build their background knowledge on specific topics. After identifying any gaps in the background knowledge to fully understand the text, teachers can provide explicit instruction on vocabulary development to build background knowledge (Fisher et al., 2012). By improving students' background knowledge and vocabulary on specific topics, they are more likely to comprehend what they are reading and become proficient readers.

## **Culturally Responsive Environmental Supports**

### **School-Wide/Classroom-Wide Recognition System**

Within an RTI framework, teachers may either utilize a classroom-wide or a school-wide system for acknowledging the academic and social performance of their students from CLD backgrounds. Such a system is important because (a) it allows teachers to identify and teach specific academic and behavioral expectations from the beginning and throughout the school year, (b) it helps teachers to be more intentional and systematic in recognizing student efforts,

and (c) students feel encouraged when they receive positive and immediate feedback from teachers. This is especially important for students with LD, who due to frequent academic failures tend to exhibit low motivation and low self-esteem.

A widely used recognition system is the *token economy* (Simonsen & Myers, 2015). Prior to implementing a token economy system, teachers need to identify and teach explicit academic and social expectations. Then, the following steps can be taken to set up such reinforcement system.

- Students identify three to four activities, tangibles, and social events they prefer to have upon meeting academic and behavioral expectations during lesson instruction. Teachers may assess student preference by either giving a menu from which students can circle their preferences or giving a handout to jot down their responses across the three categories. In this way, CLD students have the opportunity to express their cultural preferences.
- Teachers summarize student responses and identify possible recognition items.
- A list of rewards with their possible values is posted in classrooms so students are informed.
- Teacher acknowledges student efforts during instruction by verbally explaining to student what he or she did right (“Great job! You completed your 10 sentences with their missing blanks neatly!”) and providing a token (i.e., coupon, ticket).

Upon reaching a certain number of tokens, students get to exchange those for a preferred item from the list. Particular teacher attention should be given to maintaining equal representation of students from diverse backgrounds in the recognition system. This is not to suggest recognizing students who do not meet satisfactorily classroom expectations. However, it is important that teachers be mindful of some students from CLD backgrounds, who may need prompting, guidance, and immediate feedback to achieve classroom expectations.

### **Instructional Supports**

Meeting student needs in mixed-ability classrooms is not an easy task as general education teachers need to provide sufficient opportunities for student responding, maintain students’ attention, deliver prompt instructional feedback, and assess student progress frequently (Twyman & Heward, 2016). To meet this challenge, teachers should use instructional supports that enhance active student responding and ensure equal participation of all students during group instruction. Two types of supports with empirical basis are response cards and guided notes. Response cards (RC) are pre-printed or write-on cards that students can use to

display their responses to teacher questions during group instruction. Examples of pre-printed RCs include true/false, yes/no, math signs, multiple-choice items, and so on. Write-on RCs are individual dry-erase boards in which students can write their responses. Teachers may incorporate RCs in an explicit instruction lesson as described earlier. Research on RCs with diverse learners or at risk for school failure showed that student quiz performance improved, active participation increased, and student classroom disruptions decreased (Lambert, Cartledge, Heward, & Lo, 2006; Schnorr, Freeman-Green, & Test, 2016; Wood, Mabry, Kretlow, Lo, & Galloway, 2009).

An additional instructional material that strengthens equal and active participation of diverse learners in general education settings is guided notes. Guided notes (GN) are teacher-developed structured worksheets that incorporate visual cues, key terms, and fill-in-the-blank sentences prompting students to actively participate in a traditional teacher-led instruction (Twyman & Heward, 2016). Research syntheses on GNs demonstrated that students from CLD backgrounds evidenced increased test performance during GN instruction and improved note-taking accuracy (Konrad, Joseph, & Eveleigh, 2009; Larwin, Dawson, Erickson, & Larwin, 2012).

**Technological Supports.** The growth of technological software (e.g., Skype, search engines, reading programs) and hardware (e.g., smartphones, laptops, desktop computers, iPads, Android tablets) applications has been impressive over the past decade for improving the reading performance of students from CLD backgrounds. Incorporating technology for reading instruction has some notable instructional benefits for these students related to effective behavior management, individualized and explicit instruction, active student responding, and increasing student motivation (Musti-Rao, Cartledge, Bennett, & Council, 2015). Gibson et al. (2014) implemented a supplemental computer-based individualized instructional program to improve the reading fluency skills of eight African American first graders identified at risk for reading failure. The program followed an explicit instruction on vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Results showed improvements in reading fluency and comprehension for all participants. Incorporating technological supports should strengthen student needs and should not take over teacher instruction.

### **Conclusion**

This article described the overall instructional framework of culturally responsive reading instruction within an RTI framework. This framework considers first and foremost the importance of developing reflective and culturally competent teachers who are utilizing curriculum content, instructional delivery, and environmental supports that have

empirical basis and are meaningful and relevant to the linguistically and culturally diverse student needs. Helping students from CLD backgrounds achieve academically requires a careful holistic approach in which educators are instrumental in their success.

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### Note

1. The situation is a fictionalized account drawn from several authentic situations and was put together as an aggregated scenario.

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