

ACTION 100 and Students Receiving Special Education Services

Approximately 12% of students in grades K-12 currently receive special education services. These students include: those with diagnosed learning disabilities (39%); speech or language impairment (22%); other health impairments (10%); mental retardation (8%); emotional disturbance (7%); developmental delay (5%); autism (4%); multiple disabilities (2%); hearing impairments (1%); and orthopedic impairments (1%). As noted by the International Center for Leadership in Education, the vast majority of these students will substantially benefit from higher quality instruction in inclusive, regular education classrooms. Indeed, as Karin Chenoweth has noted, “*As many as 40 percent of children who receive special education services do so solely because they were never taught to read properly, experts estimate.*”

ACTION 100 is a 12-Step RtI Accountability Framework Built on the Common Core State Standards that accelerates the academic achievement of students receiving special education services and other struggling students in grades Pre-K through 12 *with a focus on ensuring that every student reads on grade level.* This document highlights the specific features and components of Action 100 that make it ideal to address the needs of this diverse population in ways that are academically rigorous, systematic, and sustainable – and are consistent with:

- the recommendations of the *President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002)*
- the recommendations from *Fewer, Clearer, Higher Common Core Standards: Implications for Students Receiving Special Education Services*, International Center for Leadership in Education (2011)
- the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers’ statement on the *Application of Common Core Standards to Students with Disabilities (2011)*
- the IES Practice Guide on What Works Clearing House regarding *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-tier Intervention in the Primary Grades (2009)*.

1. A Leveling System for Readers and Text Built on the Common Core State Standards

The *Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA)* framework is a consolidated response to RtI and Common Core State Standards implementation. When it comes to the population of students receiving special education services, the key is that identical standards are used for these students as for students who are not receiving such services. All students are challenged to excel within the general education curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards. However, instruction delivered to students with disabilities must incorporate appropriate supports and accommodations. And, as noted by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), “interventions that begin in the regular education program have the most positive impact on students in special education.” The IRLA framework is just such an intervention.

In ACTION 100 schools, all students (Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III) are leveled, assessed, challenged, and instructed using the same, standards-based, developmentally-appropriate leveling system embodied in the IRLA. Regular education and special education teachers share and discuss the information gained from personal interactions with students and text guided by the IRLA, and create instructional plans based on those insights. The specific reading needs identified for a special education student can, therefore, be addressed in the regular education program and the student can receive complementary and enhancing intervention to address those same needs from his special education teacher. Core instruction is aligned with intervention. Students receive consistent, coherent curricula and advance more quickly.

2. Action 100 as Formative Assessment within an RtI Model

- Every student is assessed to determine reading proficiency level using the Common Core State Standards for Reading, both in literature and informational text, as well as the Language standards key to reading success. Students who receive special education services who are at risk of reading problems are immediately identified. Progress is monitored every day, and recorded on *SchoolPace*, an online data tracker and management suite, through one-on-one conferencing and expert observation of literacy skills displayed throughout the school day. The Action 100 framework is a decisive response to the recommendation of the *President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002)* that “educators put more energy into monitoring student progress in academic areas.”
- Data from daily progress monitoring drives instructional decisions and the alignment of human and material resources to meet the needs of individual students.
- 30 days of intensive Executive Coaching empower the school leadership to become instructional leaders in their buildings, and teachers (regular education and special education) to function as trained literacy experts who:
 - Use the Common Core State Standards-based IRLA as a tool of formative assessment to drive instruction.
 - Implement high quality, effective, on-grade level Tier 1 instruction.
 - Orchestrate and deliver successful Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, with the support of the leadership team, reading coaches, Title I personnel, volunteers, etc.
 - Recognize the benefits of working together as a community of learners themselves under the common language, standards, and grade expectations established in the IRLA.

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- Embed the five elements that schools must address to support the achievement of students receiving special education services as schools transition to the new Common Core State Standards:
 - *Ownership* – understanding among staff that students receiving special education services are the responsibility of all
 - *High Expectations* – understanding by administrators, faculty, and students that all students will be challenged and expected to perform to the best of their ability
 - *Intervention Systems* – policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure that struggling learners meet academic and/or behavioral expectations as measured by improved performance
 - *Inclusion/Collaborative Teaching* – teaching methodologies in which students receiving special education services are included in the general education classrooms and have access to both content and special education expertise
 - *Organization/Professional Development* – successful programs for all struggling learners depend on alignment of and access to standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment and data-driven professional development to support teachers in achieving goals.

(Fewer, *Clearer, Higher Common Core State Standards Implications for Students Receiving Special Education Services*, The International Center for Leadership in Education, February 2011)

- *SchoolPace* provides all stake-holders access to real time reports, including Rate of Reading Growth by individual student, classroom, or subgroup. Regular education and special education teachers meet regularly to assess SchoolPace data and use it to plan instruction and interventions. Such collaboration between regular education and special education teachers is a principal concept in The International Center for Leadership in Education's *Fewer, Clearer, Higher Common Core State Standards Implications for Students Receiving Special Education Services*,

3. A Literacy Block Impacted by Best Practices

Action 100 incorporates best practices into the delivery of instruction effectively, independent of the particular core literacy programs chosen by the district or school; it is aligned with recommendations from the IES on what works in meeting the needs of all students struggling with reading, including students with disabilities:

- Structured pair and small group activities that use student partnering at different ability levels or different English language proficiency strategically and in ways that are mutually enriching.

- Small group and intensive one-to-one interventions targeted to address the unique and ever-changing needs of students receiving special education services.
- State-of-the-art self-contained curriculum in reading, writing, and science inquiry (Zoology One) for students who enter Kindergarten and first grade with weak reading and pre-reading skills.
- Daily, structured, standards-based practice in reading, writing, speaking and listening with a Readers' and Writers' Workshop format, preparing all students for proficiency on standardized testing and academic success beyond the Literacy block. Built-in modeling, teaching and re-teaching of focus skills by the teacher, accompanied by consistent, rigorous feedback from teacher and peers, ensure that all students have constant access to high-quality models of academic English beyond print.
- 30 minutes of monitored and structured daily independent reading practice, allowing all students to apply the focus skills as well as their individual target skills to self-selected books that match their actual reading proficiency level.

4. Volume Reading in the Context of Leveled Libraries

- Classrooms are flooded with hundreds of high-quality, age-appropriate trade books, organized into color-coded collections established on the basis of the literacy skills that, according to the CCS, are needed to successfully decode, comprehend and evaluate text of increasing complexity. The collections, presented in an easy-to-understand sequence, regularly rotate throughout the school to create a dynamic, engaging, literacy-rich learning environment.
- Student engagement and student choice are honored and encouraged, as they decide the books they *want* to read -from among the books that they *can* read- both in school and at home for a minimum of one hour every day.
- Carefully designed collections represent a broad range of cultural traditions, and mirror the talents, heritage, practices and perspectives that the diverse population of students with disabilities bring with them to enrich their schools and communities. Multiculturalism and diversity are celebrated as the school becomes a community of avid readers engaged in critical thinking.

5. Subject and Academic Learning Sustained Beyond the Literacy Block

Other programs specifically developed to extend learning into the content areas of Science and Social Studies, with materials and learning strategies centered on thematic inquiry and Project-Based Learning:

- Research Labs
- Research Labs Express
- Zoology One (for K-1)
- Genre Studies (High School only)

Students receiving special education services push the educational community to think creatively, act swiftly, and invest smartly, so that the full potential of each and every student is realized. ARC is committed to partnering with you in shaping what is best for your population of students with disabilities, as we prepare all students for lives of academic and career success and engagement as citizens. With state-of-the-art programs and tools supported by expert training in the effective deployment and management of your human and material resources, ARC is dedicated to one and only one goal: every child, every day – reading, thinking, and problem solving at or above grade-level.

Action 100 is also available en Español.