

# Preface

This book is for educators, administrators, literacy specialists, parents, and others who work with language learners who are struggling with literacy and are interested in learning more about effective interventions to use with this student population. It is also a useful text in courses for the preparation of in-service and pre-service teachers who plan to work with language learners.

The Literacy Club (LC) has gone through a number of iterations before arriving at its current format, but its purpose—to support language learners in becoming more successful in both literacy and language development—has never wavered. It seems that in every classroom, no matter how effective the instruction, a handful of students always struggles with learning to read and write. The LC finds effective instruction and intervention that supports these students and enables them to make significant growth toward language and content standards.

Beginning with the initial implementation of the LC (then known as *Club de Lectura*; Henn-Reinke, 2004), some key components have been put into place and have remained constant through the various revisions of the LC that have made it more receptive to meeting student needs. There has been a consistent focus on evaluating baseline data and designing instruction to meet each student's needs. Students are organized into small groups of four or fewer and the pacing remains rigorous to guide students as fully and efficiently as possible toward grade-level literacy goals. Strategy development and student self-assessment of progress have been established as ways to develop critical thinking skills and guide students to take greater ownership of their learning. Providing opportunities for students to express understanding, both orally and in writing, is an integral component of the original plan as well.

Changes in the field of education over the last several years have dictated refinements in the LC that heavily influenced its current format. The most encompassing change has come with the Common Core Standards, which have been adopted by many states. The advent of language standards for language learners have helped to both standardize and revolutionize the education of this population by providing guidance in teaching and measuring language skills fully and directly. This emphasis on a developmental approach to language learning has led to providing opportunities for students to explore and analyze vocabulary, language structure, and discourse levels of language use, referred to as metalanguage.

Analysis of changes in population demographics show that more students in bilingual programs enter school already possessing varying levels of language ability in both languages. Therefore, simultaneous literacy models are more common among the various bilingual programs throughout the country and enable students to focus on literacy development in two languages at the same time. Students coming to school with some level of language fluency in both English and Spanish are encouraged to use what they know in each language to support their language development in both languages.

This changing demographic has dovetailed with the growth of dual language programs. Students serve as linguistic role models for their classmates and language learning is accessible for all students. In any program, however, there are some students who need additional support beyond the instruction that they receive in the classroom (Tier 1) to be successful. The LC is designed for this group of students and may focus on either English only or English and Spanish (or other languages), depending on the students' needs. Specific strands may be organized that focus on the needs of advancing bilinguals (students who already have a solid level of oral proficiency in the language of intervention), emerging bilinguals (students who need a strong emphasis on oracy), and English as an additional language (students who speak a language other than English but who are not enrolled in a bilingual program).

The design of the LC is flexible so districts can tailor its use to students' needs, district mandates, types of programs, and so forth. What is non-negotiable is the intensity and the depth of the language and literacy intervention. This rigor is achieved through an intensive and meaningful focus on oracy, literacy, and metacognition (strategy development and metalanguage) goals. The sociocultural foundations of linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy, student-centered instruction, scaffolding and differentiation, continuous progress monitoring, and collaboration anchor the design, implementation, and refinement of the LC.

The LC may be classified as a mid-level Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>; Gottlieb, 2013). It is designed to complement and augment the work of classroom teachers, which occurs when the LC and classroom teachers work collaboratively to meet the literacy and language needs of LC students. In an optimal situation, teachers who already hold English as a second language (ESL) and/or bilingual teaching licenses are selected to teach in the LC. These teachers are well versed in effective scaffolding and the integration of language and literacy and are, therefore, uniquely qualified to carry out LC instruction.

An intensive and ongoing professional development (PD) plan is a critical element of any successful RtI<sup>2</sup> program for language learners. This volume serves as a valuable resource in the PD process to establish the goals of the LC and the role of the sociocultural foundations in designing, implementing, and refining the LC in a school or district. Once an LC program has been established, additional PD might include an emphasis on continuous monitoring of student progress, the role of oracy and metalanguage, the development of reading and writing strategies, and differentiation and scaffolding of instruction.

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## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

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- Chapter 1 provides an overview and rationale for the development of the LC and how it has been structured to effectively meet the needs of language learners in a variety of environments.
- Chapter 2 outlines the well-developed elements and structures of the assessment process, which is a key component of the LC in continuously monitoring student progress.
- Chapters 3–6 focus on specific grade-level examples of the implementation of an LC program. Work samples of students' written and oral participation shared in these

chapters reflect composites of work from actual LC students over the years. Readers are encouraged to read the examples for the target grade levels and note the developmental progression in language and literacy across the grade levels.

- Chapter 7 features guidelines and suggestions for the design and implementation of an LC program in a school or district.

Practitioners, administrators, and parents may wish to determine the needs of students relative to the development of language and literacy in English-medium and/or bilingual programs and set goals for an RtI<sup>2</sup> program of this nature. They are also encouraged to determine ways in which the LC might be adapted to best meet the needs of the particular students they serve.

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## SPECIAL FEATURES

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- In-depth overview of an instruction and intervention program designed specifically for language learners with a focus on “same goals by different pathways”
- A well-developed focus on both literacy and language development
- A strong focus on the integration of metacognition in all LC sessions, specifically in terms of metalanguage and strategy development
- A flexible instruction and intervention plan that enables schools/districts to adapt the format to meet their students’ needs
- A collaboration plan between LC and classroom teachers to ensure that the same standards, strategies, genres, and themes are addressed in both settings
- A well-developed assessment plan to provide ongoing progress monitoring, including a strong emphasis on student self-assessment and goal setting
- A rigorous instruction and intervention design that enables language learners to move along as fully and quickly as possible toward grade level language and content standards

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