



Photo: ©USAID Uganda School Health and Reading Program (SHRP)

Evidence-Based Solutions for Improved Teaching and Learning

RTI works to improve learning at scale for all children, regardless of gender; language; socioeconomic status; or physical, cognitive, or other barriers. Our approach to teaching and learning is grounded in rigorous, evidence-based pedagogy, with a focus on creating environments that are safe and conducive to learning. We work closely with education stakeholders and governments to tailor teaching and learning curricula and materials to local contexts, while fostering sustainability and self-reliance at all levels of education systems.

We strive to ensure that all children acquire skills that are critical to future learning and success, including:

- **Literacy**—reflecting a balanced approach that combines explicit instruction with exposure to different types of materials to develop a culture of reading and to improve writing skills;
- **Numeracy and mathematics**—building strong foundations and developing functional mathematics skills through authentic learning experiences; and
- **Social and emotional learning**—creating positive and supportive learning environments, and safe spaces, for teachers and children to form and exercise social and emotional competencies and agency.

Setting the standard for excellence

RTI leads the field in researching and documenting best teaching and learning practices in low- and middle-income countries.

What works in early grade literacy instruction

- More than a decade of experience tailoring teaching and learning approaches and taking them to scale is reflected in this compilation of RTI's best practices, which are grounded in current research and the use of the "5 Ts" (teach, text, time, test, tongue). <https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/what-we-have-learned-past-decade>

What works in early reading materials

- This paper captures the practices RTI has developed and refined to put high-quality, low-cost books in the hands of teachers and students, particularly in contexts with high linguistic diversity and low operational capacity for producing and distributing instructional materials. <https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/what-works-early-reading-materials>

Effectiveness of teachers' guides in the Global South

- This report presents findings from RTI's recent study on effectiveness of teachers' guides across 13 countries and 19 projects, examining different use cases and introducing a scripting index to enable comparisons of scripted guides across projects. <https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/effectiveness-teachers-guides-global-south>

Our Expertise & Selected Project Experience

Building country ownership. RTI builds the capacity of local stakeholders and governments to take ownership of their development journeys and implement sustainable, quality education programming. Through the **USAID Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity** in **Kenya**, RTI worked with the Ministry of Education to dramatically reduce the cost of books. Using its own funding, the government reprinted the current version of grade 1 Tusome books nationally at a fraction of the cost of previous book procurements, enabling it to produce high-quality, long-lasting books at a 1:1 student-to-book ratio nationwide.

Development of curricula and teaching and learning materials. RTI partners with local stakeholders to tailor curricula, teaching and learning materials, and assessment systems that are high quality, are aligned across grades and content areas, are responsive to the realities of local environments, and build upon teachers' knowledge and existing practices. Through the **USAID Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance (READ TA)** project, RTI developed an approach to materials development from primary to grade 8 that emphasized cohesion across the grades, in part by 1) creating a national reading syllabus that was adapted to seven local languages to ensure shared expectations of student learning across languages, and 2) utilizing learning progressions that specified the knowledge, skills, and competencies students needed to master. In **Jordan**, under the **USAID Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative**, RTI introduced routines into its mathematics materials that were sequenced to capture developmental progressions, which has contributed to notable gains in student learning. Halfway through this program, students in grade 2 were performing at or above the level at which grade 3 students were performing at the beginning of implementation.

Classroom-based assessment. When teachers can effectively use classroom-based assessments to inform their instruction, student learning improves. RTI provides explicit guidance during teacher trainings on how to give learners positive, constructive feedback. Further, materials developers embed prompts and reminders in teachers' guides to promote the adoption of these strategies. In **Nigeria**, through the **USAID Reading and Access Research Activity (RARA)**, RTI introduced a formative assessment cycle to teachers that included assessing learners' prior knowledge and mastery of new skills in order to differentiate instruction.

Reading Gains Under USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program

An early grade reading assessment showed that **37% of students in intervention schools were reading at or above benchmark in grade 4, compared to 13% of students in the comparison group.** These benefits persisted into grade 6, two years after students had left the program

Teacher professional development. To master new skills, teachers need more than stand-alone trainings; they need systematic ongoing support. Such support can and should include a combination of expert instructional coaching and in-school mentoring. Through the **USAID Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity**, RTI has supported the government of **Kenya** to provide regular one-on-one instructional coaching to more than 70,000 teachers in grades 1–3.

Family and community engagement. Like any skill, gaining fluency in reading or mathematics requires practice, in and out of the classroom. By collaborating with teachers to reach out to parents, RTI has impacted family attitudes about learning enriching behaviors and promoted positive behavior change. After a social and behavior change communication initiative in **Senegal**, RTI-supported families reported more than three times the level of engagement with children in out-of-school learning activities than did comparison families.

Policy alignment. RTI approaches its teaching and learning activities with a systems perspective that promotes innovations from the classroom all the way to the central government. In **Egypt**, under the **USAID Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes** project, we worked with the Ministry of Education to change policies that increased reading instruction by 20 to 30 minutes per day and required teacher certification in early grade reading. At the end of the project, results demonstrated an astounding 82% increase in oral reading fluency, leading the Ministry of Education to scale up the project nationally benefiting a total of 4.2 million children in grades 1 to 3.

More Information

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