

# Book Study

Prepared by the  
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

## *Annual Growth for All Students, Catch-Up Growth for Those Who Are Behind*

Lynn Fielding, Nancy Kerr & Paul Rosier  
(The New Foundation Press, Kennewick, WA, 2007)

“This is a ‘how-to’ book—how to get 90-95% of your students to your state’s reading and math standards.” (XIII) *Annual Growth, Catch-Up Growth* walks readers through the steps, as well as the pitfalls, as schools begin the journey of using a multi-tiered system to effectively reach all students.

**Target Audience:** District, building or grade level teams who are just beginning the structuring phases of an MTSS system. Easy read, 236pp.

## **Chapter 1: The Kennewick Model: Targeted Accelerated Growth**

### **Overview**

This chapter whets the reader's appetite for what could be reality in his/her own school.

### **Helpful Hints**

It might be beneficial to begin this book study by actually reading chapter one during the time allotted. Discuss RtI and what the participants currently know about it. It may also be beneficial to frame the discussion around the following question:

Based on what you read, what questions are popping into your head about this school and how they achieved such results?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How would the Kennewick School Board's goal of 90% of third graders reading at or above grade level in three years be received in your school/district?
2. How do we feel about our current achievement scores? Does our current system support higher scores? Why or why not?
3. Discuss David Montague's quotation on the opening page of this chapter. To what extent is this true of our school as we embark on this MTSS venture?

## **Chapter 2: Washington Elementary: “No Exceptions, No Excuses”**

### **Overview**

This chapter lays out the aggressive approach to achieving the district goal of getting all kids reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3.

### **Helpful Hints**

This chapter jumps right into the philosophical and practical commitments made by this school to a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) format. You will have a picture of the intensity, as well as the contagious enthusiasm this system can create. Give yourselves plenty of time to talk through this chapter.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How would our school fare if Dave Montague scored us on “look-fors”? Where would we excel? Where do we have room to improve?
2. Discuss their commitment to the 2 hour block and the amount of potential lost time with late starts and early stops.
3. Look again at how they define direct, eyeball-to-eyeball instruction in the last 2 paragraphs on page 25. Could our current reading time be described this way? How well do we “dance” with our current core curriculum? Is it reaching 80% of our students?
4. What data do we collect on all students? How do we currently use it?
5. What does our data say? Do we know how our students are doing?
6. What new questions has this chapter brought up for you?

## Chapter 3: Proportional Increases In Direct Instruction Time

### Overview

Chapter 3 outlines how decisions are made to increase the instructional time for students and what that is based on.

### Helpful Hint

It would be helpful to do some calculations with your own students based on the formula described in this chapter. It also warrants some discussion around current use of Title and special education staff in the traditional format.

### Discussion Questions

1. Looking at our state assessments as part of our data, what would we consider “adequate yearly growth”? Is this a true picture of what students are truly reading and mathematically competent at grade level?
2. Do our assessment practices provide adequate information to guide decision-making and instruction? How so?
3. Do we have any form similar to the Time and Focus Report? How would we use this information?
4. When we count only direct instruction time (not SSR or reading in the content or workbook pages), how many minutes of core instruction are all students getting? How much additional?
5. Comment on the other First World countries’ commitment to reading and math in the box on page 48.
6. As we consider tiered instruction, what will it require to offer both quality and quantity to our struggling readers?

## Chapter 4: Superb Direct Instruction: Stephanie's Classroom

### Overview

Chapter 4 allows us to peek in a classroom modeling the instructional framework the Kennewick School district has embraced.

### Helpful Hints

This chapter models what both tiered and core reading instruction look like when it is direct and focused. Notice how not a moment is wasted with any student! This running log of a "typical" reading block should set up plenty of discussion beyond the following questions. Your district may also want to invest in the DVD of "direct eyeball-to-eyeball, student-engaged teaching."

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss your thoughts regarding using a paraprofessional in the same room with a slightly larger, slightly more advanced group. How does this differ from how we are currently using paras or aides in our building?
2. Does our instruction look more like Stephanie's current classroom or the "reading group" scenario outlined on page 56?
3. What pieces need to be in place in our school to model "classroom instruction of high rigor," with lessons "intentionally designed to achieve the targeted learning"?
4. What appeals to you about this modeled lesson? What questions do you have about how this is implemented?

## Chapter 5: Instructional Leadership: Our Craft

### Overview

Chapter 5 sets up the building leadership role in an effective school-wide MTSS. By looking at the basic formula for achievement, the 4 questions guiding a district wide approach to professional development, and building an instructional framework, the authors outline the initial journey of their administrators in this process.

### Helpful Hints

It might be beneficial to use a piece of chart paper to look at this 4 part instructional framework on page 65. A good activity would be to take the core beliefs of an MTSS and see where each of these fit within this framework.

### Discussion Questions

1. As you look at the factors accounting for difference in student growth, do you agree with the 3 factors and their amount of importance? Why or why not?
2. Which quintile of students do we tend to target in an era where teachers have been taught to “teach to the middle”? Does this philosophy match with MTSS?
3. How consistently do we recognize good instruction? What does high rigor, high engagement and clear lesson purpose look like?
4. How do the open-ended questions on the bottom of page 65 correlate with our current teacher evaluation tool?
5. Discuss the two-ten goal from page 67. Is this a realistic goal in our district? Why or why not?
6. Discuss the comment on page 68, “Talk is the best cultural indicator of focus.” What does talk center around in our team meetings, teacher’s lounge, and faculty meetings?
7. What value do you see in a common vision of what good instruction looks like and having all the stakeholders speaking the same language?

## **Chapter 6: Loving the Data: Diagnostic Testing, Teaching to the Deficiency, and Re-testing**

### **Overview**

In this chapter, we get a first glimpse of the data that has driven this school's instruction.

### **Helpful Hints**

This chapter will no doubt open the discussion of current assessments your district is using. It would be very helpful to have someone who has gathered what you are currently using for screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome purposes. It's also a good place to discuss what you are using to assess each of the Big 5 areas of reading.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do we initially screen students who are "at risk" of not reaching benchmark early in the year?
2. As a staff, how deep is our understanding of the 5 elementary reading subskills outlined on page 75? Do we have diagnostic tools and a deep enough understanding to target those subskills in a tiered intervention time?
3. Can we articulate the sequence of these subskills? Talk about the core belief of "relentless teaching" as it relates to teaching the same deficit subskill until the student masters it.
4. Discuss the following quote: "The year has been about falling in love with what the data show is working for their students and falling out of love with well-worn practices that don't work." What makes this difficult in practice?

## Chapter 7: Assessing Your Assessment System

### Overview

Chapter 7 is written in a question-answer format to build a blueprint of a quality assessment system.

### Helpful Hints

There are many references to NWEA's MAP assessment. The Core team sees this as a great tool for differentiating core, but does not give us the information we need for a universal screener, diagnostic, or progress monitor. It is, however, a great supporting data source and is often used in part for the multi-step process at the secondary level. If your district does not use NWEA's MAP test, this chapter may leave you with more questions than answers. It may be worthwhile to visit their website, [www.nwea.org](http://www.nwea.org), for more information on this.

If your district is using the MAP tests, but have not had the opportunity to "drill down" with the data, this would be a great next step to pursue.

### Discussion Questions

1. Does our current assessment system allow us to see which students failed to make annual growth, made annual growth, and made double or triple annual growth?
2. As a study group, work your way through the 6 critical questions this chapter outlines and discuss the type of data you are currently getting to assist in making good decisions for students in relation to MTSS. If you can't answer some of these questions, where could you go for further information or staff development on using these assessments?
3. Talk about the analogy of the car in the driveway on page 85. As we look at students who are not on benchmark, how would solid assessments assist us in performing a diagnostic to get that child "back on the road" again? How is this a different approach to assessments than what we usually see (ex: tests don't match what we teach, they're a waste of time, etc.)?



## Chapter 8: What Our Elementary Principals Are Saying

### Overview

Chapter 8 is written almost like a transcript of a conversation with the elementary principals who have walked through this process in the Kennewick district.

### Helpful Hints

While the conversations are being held with building level principals, there are many aspects of the discussion that apply to the rest of the staff, as well. It's helpful for all of us to gain an understanding of the roles each member of the team needs to play to make an MTSS work in our building.

### Discussion Questions

1. The principals talk extensively about how change takes time and teachers will ask, "How are we going to fit it all in?" What other questions/roadblocks do you anticipate will come up in this process in your building?
2. Are we a building that "fights data or embraces it"? What evidence is there to our answer?
3. Chuck comments on page 89 that "it takes a while to turn a ship." What issues could we address during the first year of structuring an MTSS to help our ship turn a bit easier?
4. What other comments made by these principals do you find worth discussing as they relate to our school/district?

## **Chapter 9: The Board and Superintendent: Policy, Governance & the 90% Reading Goal**

### **Overview**

This chapter chronicles the Board and superintendent's trip to the 90% goal, where the idea came from, and the various pitfalls along the way.

### **Helpful Hints**

This chapter is fairly historical in nature and has some graphs that will probably need some time to process. It might be worthwhile to work through those as a group and look for trends in the data.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Although state assessments can be viewed on KSDE's report card, how do we feel about scores being issued by the school for public viewing? Would our response be much different than Kennewick's? (shock, anger, then resolution, determination and productive efforts)
2. How does our school/district feel, at its core, about our ability to teach 90% of our students to read at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade?
3. Notice the differentiation of the term "total reading time" and "direct reading instruction minutes." If we exclude reading in the content areas and practice time, how many minutes of direct instruction are we giving students?
4. Do we have policies in place that support or obstruct our ability to offer more reading instruction proportionate to a child's reading needs?

## Chapter 10: Getting to the Goal Faster: Central Office Reflections

### Overview

Like Chapter 8, we get to sit in on a conversation with the central office on how change occurred within the district.

### Helpful Hints

This chapter asks some really tough questions about our response to data. Don't rush through these discussions as you work toward making the staff more comfortable with what data is telling us.

### Discussion Questions

1. The change from feeling threatened to feeling empowered by the data is crucial to this process. Where are we on the continuum of these two emotions where our data is concerned as individual teachers, grade levels, buildings and a district? How can we ease this process?
2. "Until you change your behavior, you cannot really change deep, embedded beliefs....you're just mouthing the words, because it's politically acceptable." How does this relate to us?
3. How well trained is our staff on our current core curriculum? Do we need to "bring in the experts" to do this?
4. Much of the belief system of Kennewick mirrors MTSS Core Beliefs. How many of these do we just mouth the words and how many have already begun to change our behavior?

## Chapter 11: Union Leadership Perspectives

### Overview

This chapter describes the union's response to the White Paper. It's interesting to see how the opinions changed with time.

### Helpful Hints

Depending on how active the union is within your district, this chapter may need to be discussed within the parameter of how this would be accepted in our "teachers lounge" negotiations.

### Discussion Questions

1. A lot of comments in this chapter center around strong communication and feedback between administration and teachers. What can we do to encourage positive communication in our building/district?
2. Jan mentions going slow to go fast (page 133). Where do we need to go slow in this process?

## Chapter 12: The Face of a Child

### Overview

This chapter is the “tale of 2 children,” and is gut-wrenching as we follow them through the traditional school system.

### Helpful Hints

One of the most powerful quotes in this book, from Lynn Fielding, is found in bold at the beginning of this chapter. It is worth stopping and discussing before moving into the questions. This chapter might also be extremely powerful if read aloud together.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are we currently doing to locate the Tonys who come to kindergarten “with a new shirt, a bright smile, and his parents’ eager hopes for him, but with the pre-literacy skills typical of a two- or three-year-old”?
2. Several states are now using the number of non-reading 4<sup>th</sup> graders to project the number of prison beds they will need in the future. Given this sobering statistic, consider the face of a child you know. Discuss what the future may hold if their school experience continues as it currently exists.

## Chapter 13-15 (combined)

### Overview

These chapters lay out the “national story” of educational reform.

### Helpful Hints

These chapters will probably fill in a lot of missing pieces for you about how we got to “No Child Left Behind,” the forces behind this movement, and how it looks in other states. It will be important to avoid the political discussions that could take us on a “birdwalk.” Consider these chapters more of a history lesson where educational reform is concerned.

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss why the job market is demanding higher verbal and math skills than 50% of our high school students possess. What has changed?
2. Reflect on the implications for education when the business world began to push for standards-based education.
3. Look at table 14.1 on page 161. How does Kansas stack up in the “easy grader” race? How do you feel about where we land?
4. The authors outline 3 reasons “waiting it out” for legislation to change is not a great idea. Discuss those three factors and how they impact your student population.
5. Read the analogy on page 170 together. Where are we in this process?

## Chapter 16: Achievement, Annual Growth & Catch Up Growth

### Overview

This is a fascinating chapter that allows us to look at children’s learning rates and how this plays out long-term.

### Helpful Hints

You will want to allow plenty of time to look at the graphs and charts in this chapter. There is a wealth of information embedded in these and well worth taking a long hard look.

### Discussion Questions

1. Look at Figure 16.1 on page 174 and do the exercise at the bottom of page 175. This is a sobering activity, to say the least. What other observations can you make from this graph?
2. Discuss the idea that kids learn at nearly equal rates. What are the implications for educators?
3. Brainstorm ideas for how we can shrink the gap we inherit as children come to school.
4. Discuss students we know who “expend greater effort to learn less” (181). How can we get more bang for the buck with these students during Intervention Time?
5. Walk through the bulleted points on pages 182 & 183. What stands out? Can I choose 1 that I can really feel passionate about?

## Chapter 17-19: Growth at Building Levels

### Overview

Here's your chance to see if what these schools are doing is really working.

### Helpful Hints

Although you may want to discuss only the chapter that fits your building level, it is valuable to read all three chapters to get a more global perspective of the results the Kennewick schools are achieving.

### Discussion Questions

1. Look at Figure 17.1 on page 187. What trends do you note? Does the lack of growth in the top quintile bother you? What might be some strategies to consider to keep them moving, as well?
2. What data tool do we have to measure how many are above the line? How do we look at this data currently?
3. Do we look more like Washington Elementary or the national growth trend?
4. What conflicts can we expect at the middle school level by doubling instructional time? Brainstorm ideas to address these. It may help to frame this discussion with the phrase, "If money and time were no object, what do I want for kids who are at least a year behind in reading or math?" (Sometimes, we find that by removing these barriers, we come up with ideas that could happen with our current time and money, as well!)
5. Discuss factors that tend to "flatline" academic growth in the middle school. What factors might we impact with MTSS?
6. What difference would "keeping the data in front of us" actually make? Do we see our student data on a regular basis?
7. How strong are our high school English teachers in the Big 5 of reading? How can we build their knowledge of how students learn to read?
8. When we level the playing field, how are we doing on the expected % of pass rate? How could we figure this?



## Chapter 20 & 21: Kindergarten Issues

### Overview

Within these two chapters you will find some of the nuts and bolts of Kennewick’s approach to their earliest learners and what they have learned about children and learning before they even enter kindergarten.

### Helpful Hints

These chapters are packed with some great ideas. It might be helpful to have someone in the group record a lot of this discussion to assist in building an action plan for your district, using the pieces that appeal to you.

### Discussion Questions

1. Examine the kindergarten screener tools on pages 207 & 208. How does this match up with what we are currently using?
2. What do we spend to “catch up” kids in our district or building? How can we figure this?
3. Review the age level target tables in Chapter 21. Discuss how these might be used in our district.
4. Which pieces of TARGET, TRAINING, TOOLS, and READY! Classes are we already implementing? Are there pieces of this we could add to what we’re currently doing to make our efforts even more effective?

## Chapter 22: Reading Foundations-Engaging the Community

### Overview

As we finish our journey through this powerful book, we come upon the marketing piece, something schools are just now learning how to do effectively.

### Helpful Hints

This might be a nice place to discuss the community's perspective of our schools. It would be worth looking at perception surveys and any other data we can gather about how well our community sees us doing our job. Keep these thoughts in mind as you begin to Plan for Communication in your structuring work.

### Discussion Questions

1. As we begin to discuss the pre-school message about reading to children, how would we start to market this? Where would we place this message in order to reach the parents who need it most? (delivery model, location, etc.)
2. What messages, other than reading to children 20 minutes per day, would be effective to get to parents before their children enter kindergarten? How might we do this?

## Chapter 23: Maxims of Achievement & Growth

### Overview

You are looking at the 93 “ditches” the Kennewick school has chosen to “die in.”

### Helpful Hints

This is a chapter worth working through methodically. It may be worthwhile to actually read it as a group and stop as discuss as you go along.

### Discussion Questions

1. Which maxims do we truly believe, and not just “mouth the words”?
2. Note on the order form page, the book Delivering the Promise is also available. Would we use the school board version of this book in our district? What might be the possible implications (both good and bad) for doing this?