

# Response to Intervention (RtI)

A Practitioner's Guide To Implementation



Developed by:  
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## CORE PRINCIPLES (Colorado Department of Education)

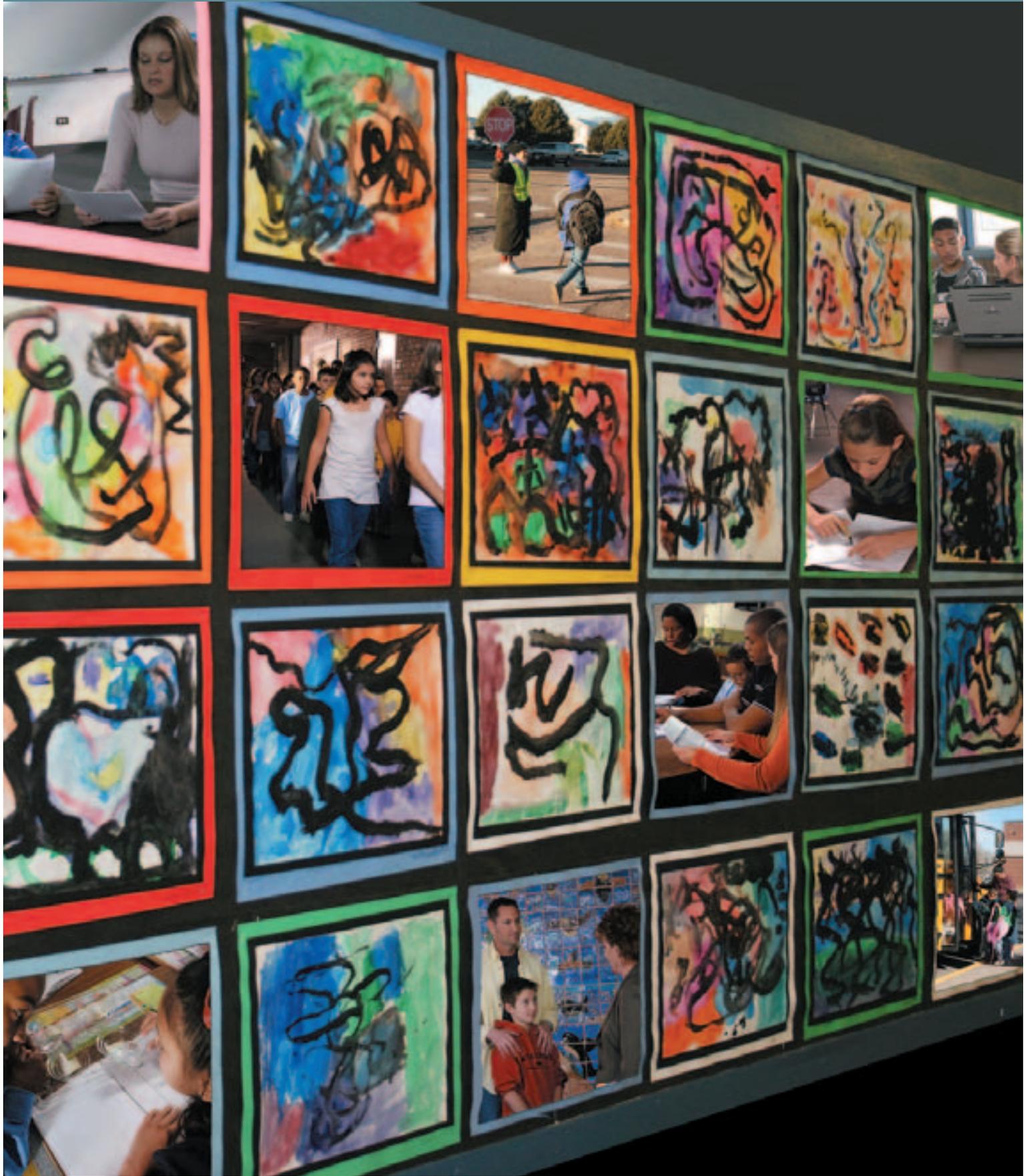
*We believe that...*

- ALL children can learn and achieve high standards as a result of effective teaching.
- All students must have access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction.
- Intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary for student success (Pre K–12).
- A comprehensive system of tiered interventions is essential for addressing the full range of student needs.
- Student results improve when ongoing academic and behavioral performance data inform instructional decisions.
- Collaboration among educators, families and community members is the foundation for effective problem-solving and instructional decision-making.
- On-going and meaningful involvement of families increases student success.
- All members of the school community must continue to gain knowledge and develop expertise in order to build capacity and sustainability of RtI.
- Effective leadership at all levels is crucial for the implementation of RtI.

**Core Principles and the framework described throughout the document was developed by the State RtI Task Force and State RtI Implementation Team.**

*The greatest benefit of RtI is that teachers across this state feel supported, and they feel like they have a strategy that they can use regardless of the uniqueness of the child that might be in front of them. But the hope is really for the child.*

—Commissioner Dwight Jones



# Introduction

## Response to Intervention Philosophy and Design

Response to Intervention is a framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction & intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs.

### Context

The Response-to-Intervention (RtI) Model is a schoolwide initiative that allows for the utilization of resources for students in need of academic and/or behavioral support. RtI provides a seamless system of interventions and resources which allows students to make significant progress whether they are at-risk for failure or are gifted and talented students not meeting their full potential. Although Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 encourages utilizing the RtI process as an alternative approach for the identification of students for special education services, the intent of the process is much more significant than eligibility alone. More importantly, the RtI Model utilizes instructional strategies such as universal screening and on-going data analysis to inform instructional interventions, flexible use of building personnel with students, as well as collaborative problem-solving among staff and parents to enhance all students' performance.

### Purpose of Document

The purpose of RtI is to improve educational outcomes for all students. RtI provides a continuum of evidence-based, tiered interventions with increasing levels of intensity and duration which is central to RtI. Furthermore, collaborative educational decisions are then based on data derived from frequent monitoring of student performance and rate of learning. RtI requires significant systems change in schools. Although certain components, such as progress monitoring and differentiated instruction are commonly used, RtI is a fully comprehensive framework for addressing student needs.

This document describes the expectations and components of a well-implemented RtI Model. Specifically, it defines central components of RtI, makes recommendations for composition of the building level problem-solving teams, identifies roles for itinerant and support staff, as well as provides examples of processes that will assist teams in their on-going student problem-solving meetings, data collection, and monitoring of a student's response to intervention. It also outlines the multi-tiered process by describing how students are served and move through varying tiers, to include intervention development, progress monitoring, and Gap Analysis. Finally, examples are provided on how RtI integrates with existing programs and populations, including:

- Integrating RtI and Positive Behavior Support (PBS)
- Considerations when making a referral for special education services
- Supporting the learning needs of a variety of students including:
  - gifted and talented
  - low-incidence disabilities
  - English language learners
  - preschool
- Schools receiving Title I funds

Principals, RtI coordinators, problem-solving team members, classroom teachers, and consultants are encouraged to utilize this document to guide decision-making as RtI becomes the schoolwide framework for meeting academic and behavioral needs of ALL students.

## Philosophy

When school personnel establish a comprehensive continuum of supports and services for ALL, students are more likely to experience success academically and behaviorally. The RtI Model conceptualizes and delivers a continuum or seamless system of services. RtI defines the process whereby students access appropriate levels of support and intervention, given their academic and/or behavioral needs. Moreover, RtI is effective only through a collaborative problem-solving approach to identify student needs, implement targeted interventions, utilize data to measure student progress as a result of the interventions, as well as to monitor intervention integrity. The RtI process requires the involvement of the classroom teacher, parent(s), student (where appropriate), and building specialists (e.g., curriculum leaders, special education teachers, ELL teachers, Title I teachers, counselors, gifted and talented specialists, speech therapists, school psychologists, school social workers, building leaders).

The ultimate purpose of the RtI process is not to determine if a student qualifies for special education, but rather, to enhance the success of students with a variety of academic and/or behavior needs.

### Components:

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) recognizes six areas significant to RtI implementation: 1) Leadership, 2) Curriculum and Instruction, 3) School Climate and Culture, 4) Problem-Solving Process, 5) Assessment, and 6) Family and Community Involvement.

#### 1). Leadership

Leadership at the state, district, and building level is crucial to the fidelity of RtI implementation. RtI is a significant change that affects the entire educational system. Initially district level administrators must understand and embrace the essential components and supports needed to effectively implement RtI. Administrators must prioritize resource allocation to support the effort, as well as offer professional development to school staffs on the philosophical underpinnings of RtI. Staff development on the RtI philosophy will help establish and promote consistency among districts and schools that is imperative for successful implementation. Additionally, superintendents,

curriculum directors, principals, special education administrators, etc. must guide the implementation of RtI by developing leadership roles and expectations for district and building administrators. Because of the broad impact of the RtI Model and its impact on the entire educational system, significant systemic changes will need to occur to execute implementation with fidelity. These changes must be championed and monitored by leaders at all levels.



Because professional development promotes change, district and school leadership should participate in trainings that develop a knowledge of curriculum and instruction across the tiers, positive school climate, the problem-solving process, progress monitoring and parent and community involvement. CDE has developed training modules to support professional development across the state and will provide training in all regions. Nonetheless, administrators' participation in developing the infrastructure for RtI has a direct correlation to the success of the model.

Although supporting initial implementation of RtI should be an important focus for districts, establishing a long term commitment of resources and time is equally critical. Schools must devote time to implementation and maintenance of the RtI Model: time for data dialogues, for problem-solving team meetings, and for development of action plans that identify continued training needs. These issues need to be monitored and reviewed by district administration. District administration should work with principals to regularly monitor and review the action plans developed by individual schools.

Leadership is critical for effective implementation of RtI. The success of RtI will be determined, to a great extent, by the degree to which district and school leaders are able to move the focus of RtI from philosophical understanding to actual practice. District and school leadership is imperative to the sustainability of the model.

## 2). Curriculum and Instruction

The RtI Model is a three-tiered system designed to meet the needs of ALL students. Curriculum based on the state standards and quality instruction are essential for student success.

**Tier I** instruction includes high quality, research-based curricula and instructional strategies that support the district’s curriculum guidelines. Tier I provides core instruction for all students. Flexible grouping that targets specific skills are included so that the instructional goals of all students can be met.

**Tier II** offers supplemental instruction in addition to the standards-based curriculum received in Tier I. The curriculum and instruction at Tier II is designed to meet the needs of students not progressing as expected in Tier I.

**Tier III** instruction includes more explicit instruction that is focused on a specific skill need, whether that be an accelerated need or a remedial need.

The following section, “Understanding the Three-Tiered Model,” provides a more detailed description of the instructional components within the RtI Model.

## 3). School Climate and Culture

The core principles of a multi-tiered RtI model support and embrace positive school climate within all school settings. Positive school climate depends on four essential elements:

1. creating a caring school community
2. teaching appropriate behavior and social problem-solving skills
3. implementing positive behavior support (PBS) and
4. providing rigorous academic instruction

Essentially, a positive school climate provides the foundation on which instruction will occur and all students will be engaged in learning. A positive school climate is observed when key elements are solidly in place.

These include:

- Defining and consistently teaching expectations of behavior for students, parents and educators;
- Students and adults are acknowledged and recognized consistently for appropriate behaviors;
- Behavioral and instructional errors are monitored, corrected, or re-taught;
- Teachers are engaged in a collaborative team problem-solving process using data to design instruction and behavior intervention plans;
- Families are included in a culturally-sensitive, solution-focused approach to support student learning.

Understanding the elements of a positive school climate is vital; however, equally important in maintaining a positive school climate is the development of systems to support school personnel in implementing the identified research-based practices to improve student outcomes. Naturally, the identified practices to support student achievement and social competence are dependent on a clear understanding of the information and data available to decision makers. The school staff needs to understand what data to collect, how frequently to use them, and the purpose for collecting data.

CDE has taken a leading role in the implementation of the School wide Positive Behavior Initiative currently being put into practice in 563 Colorado Public Schools. Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an integrated approach that clearly identifies systems, practices and the use of data to improve student outcomes. It is a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students. PBS is consistent with RtI.



## Research-Based PBS Practices

- Students receive high quality, research-based instruction by qualified staff in their general education setting.
- School staff conduct universal screening of academics and behavior.
- Frequent progress monitoring of student performance occurs for all students and is used to pinpoint student specific difficulties.
- School staff implements specific, research-based interventions to address a student’s difficulties within multiple tiers of increasing intensity.
- School staff uses progress-monitoring data and decision rules to determine interventions, their effectiveness, and needed modifications, using a problem solving process that includes use of a “standardized” treatment protocol.
- Systematic assessment of the fidelity or integrity of instruction and interventions are in place.
- Families are informed about student progress and how decisions are made and are involved in critical decisions.

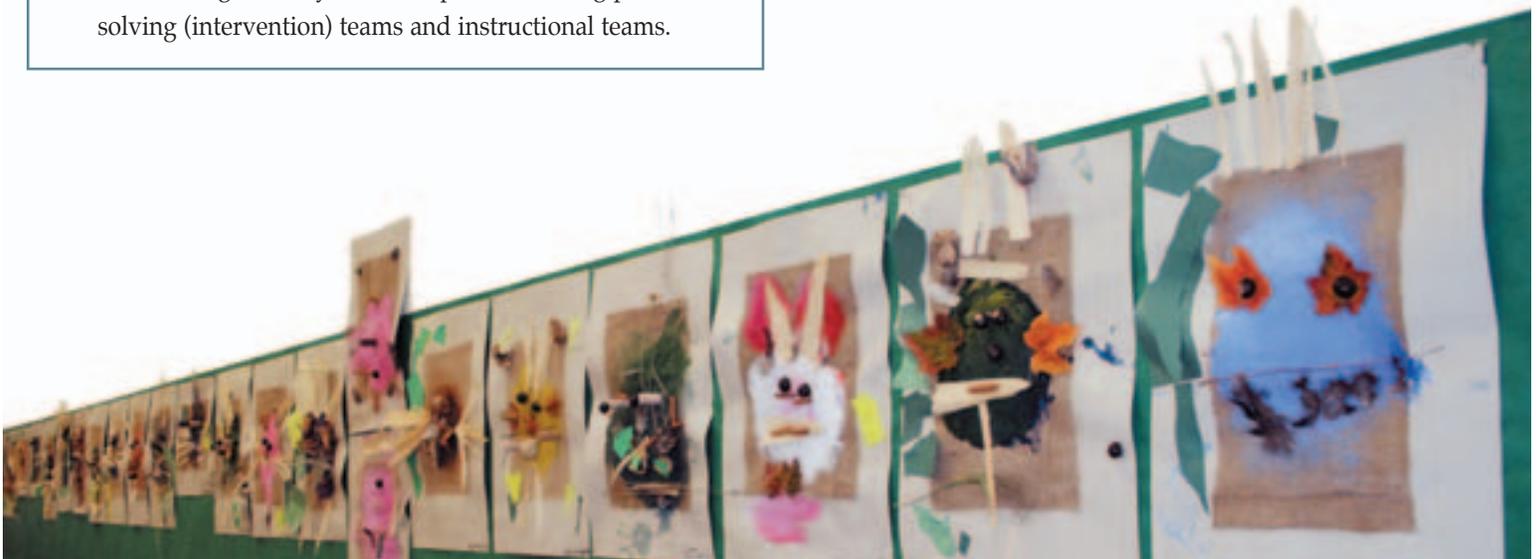
## PBS System Supports

- Collaboration is supported and team decision making occurs at multiple levels, including a leadership team, a problem solving (intervention) team, and instructional teams.
- Written documents describe policies and procedures.
- Resources are allocated to support multiple levels of intervention.
- Professional development is ongoing and job-embedded.
- Data management system is in place including problem-solving (intervention) teams and instructional teams.

## 4). Problem-Solving Process

The purpose of the problem-solving process is to assist the classroom teacher and parents in designing and selecting strategies for improving student academic and/or behavioral performance. The purpose of the problem-solving process is to develop academic and behavior intervention strategies that have a high probability of success. It provides a structure for addressing the academic and/or behavioral concerns identified by teachers or parents. A problem-solving process requires full collaboration among a team of professionals along with parents to identify a specific, measurable outcome and to design research-based interventions to address the concerns. The process includes ensuring interventions are implemented with fidelity according to their research base and student progress is monitored to determine the student’s response. Family engagement in the process is vital to ensure all information that might impact success is considered.

The purpose of problem solving is to put in place a decision-making process that will lead to the development of instructional and intervention strategies with a high probability of success. The system must integrate the use of data, both to guide the development of effective interventions and to provide frequent monitoring of progress. *The RtI in Practice* section of this manual outlines the problem-solving process steps to be used by problem-solving teams.



## 5). Assessment

A major feature of the RtI Model is its use of data to drive the decision-making process—at the individual student, classroom, and school levels. To support RtI’s fluid approach, reliable and ongoing information must be available to:

- Identify academic and behavioral needs of individual students,
- Inform the problem-solving process,
- Design and modify instruction to meet student needs,
- Evaluate the effectiveness of instruction at different levels, of the system (e.g., classroom, school, district)

An efficient system that streamlines increasingly limited resources, however, is still paramount. Therefore, RtI uses a tiered system of assessments that increase in frequency and intensity as greater needs are revealed. Timely, reliable assessments indicate which students are falling behind in critical skills or which students need their learning accelerated, as well as allow teachers to design instruction that responds to the learning needs. By regularly assessing students’ progress in learning and behavior, teachers can identify which students need more help, which are likely to make good progress without extra help, and which students need their learning accelerated.

An effective assessment plan has four main objectives:

1. To identify students at the beginning of the year who are at-risk or who are experiencing difficulties and who may need extra instruction or intensive interventions if they are to progress toward grade-level standards by the end of the year, as well as students who have reached benchmarks and who need to be challenged.
2. To monitor students’ progress during the year to determine whether at-risk students are making adequate progress in critical skills and to identify any students who may be falling behind or need to be challenged.
3. To inform instructional planning in order to meet the most critical needs of individual students.
4. To evaluate whether the instruction or intervention provided is powerful enough to help all students achieve grade-level standards by the end of each year.

The four objectives outlined above can be achieved through four types of assessments during the school year: 1) screening, 2) progress monitoring, 3) diagnostic, and 4) outcome. They correspond roughly to the four objectives above, but all can contribute in helping plan effective instruction and interventions.

### Screening Assessments

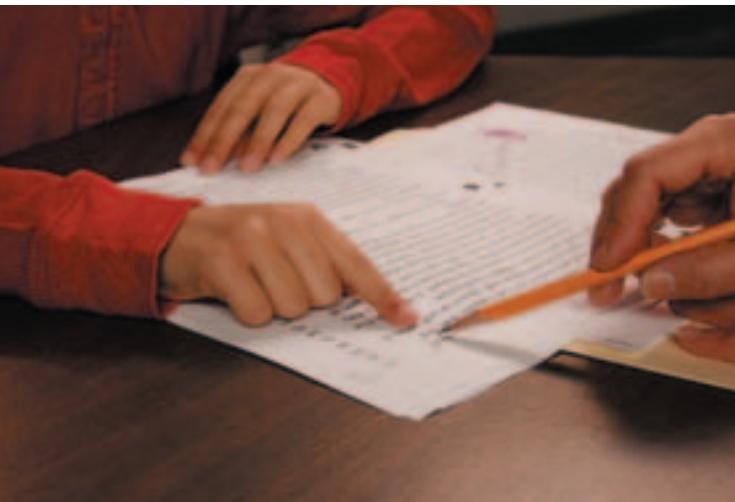
Screening assessments are quick and efficient measures of overall ability and critical skills known to be strong indicators that predict student performance. Administered to all students as an initial baseline, these assessments help to identify students who do not meet or who exceed grade level expectations. Results can be used as a starting point for instruction or to indicate a need for further evaluation.



## Progress Monitoring Assessments

Progress monitoring assessments are also brief, but are given periodically to determine whether students are making adequate progress. Progress monitoring assessment data should be collected, evaluated, and used on an ongoing basis for the following purposes:

- Determine rate of a student’s progress,
- Provide information on the effectiveness of instruction and to modify the intervention if necessary,
- Identify the need for additional information,
- Analyze and interpret gaps between benchmarks and achievement.



## Diagnostic Assessments

While relatively lengthy, diagnostic assessments provide an in-depth, reliable assessment of targeted skills. Their major purpose is to provide information for planning more effective instruction and interventions. Diagnostic assessments should be given when there is a clear expectation that they will offer new or more reliable information about a child’s academic or behavioral needs that can be used to help plan more powerful instruction or interventions.

If schools are implementing screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments in a reliable and valid way, the need for additional testing, using formal diagnostic instruments, should be reduced. Because they are time-consuming and expensive, complete diagnostic tests should be administered far less frequently than the other assessments. However, specific subtests from diagnostic instruments might be used to provide information in areas not assessed by screening, progress monitoring, or outcome assessments. School leaders should continually ask if the value of the information to teachers from formal diagnostic tests in planning instruction merits the time spent administering such tests.

## Outcome Assessments

Given at the end of the school year, outcome tests are frequently group-administered tests of important outcomes (e.g., CSAP). Outcome assessments are often used for school, district and or state reporting purposes. These tests are important because they give school leaders and teachers feedback about the overall effectiveness of their instructional program. As part of an effective assessment plan, outcome assessments should be administered at the end of every year.

## 6). Family and Community Engagement

When families, schools, and communities work together, children are more successful in school and schools improve. Effective partnerships include parents, families, students, community members and educators. Indicators of an effective partnership include 1) sharing information, 2) problem-solving, and 3) celebrating student successes. Central to effective partnership is the recognition of shared responsibility and shared ownership of student challenges and successes.

*We believe that a more authentic process that is an integral part of Response to Intervention, is having parents at the table right from the beginning to achieve a true partnership, again premised on the notion that parents know more about their child than anyone else will.*

—Assistant Commissioner Ed Steinberg

In forming partnerships, it is important to nurture the collaborative process. To develop true collaboration, parents and families must be fundamentally involved in the entire educational experience. Parents should be recognized as having important information and expertise that they can contribute to the partnership. It is important for school personnel to provide the parents with information and empower them as equal partners in supporting their children's learning. At Tier I, parent involvement in school decision making leads to an improved positive school climate. Parents and families are seen as key partners in all aspects of RtI, but their role may shift at each tier of intervention. In particular, at the targeted (Tier II) and intensive (Tier III) levels their expertise regarding the individual student is vital. At these tiers, members of the student's family may provide information about the student and strategies that will lead to improved student outcomes.



Collaboration is more than simply working together and more than just linkage; it is agreeing to formally work together to achieve mutually desired outcomes. If one is to believe the adage, "It takes a village to raise a child," then the community has a vested interest in supporting a positive school climate, which research has shown leads to better academic results. It is critical that schools recognize that cultural understanding requires more than just awareness. Understanding and respect for cultural differences is vital when attempting to engage families and foster community support.

# Understanding the Three-Tiered Model

## Colorado Multi-Tiered Model of Instruction & Intervention

### Intensive Level

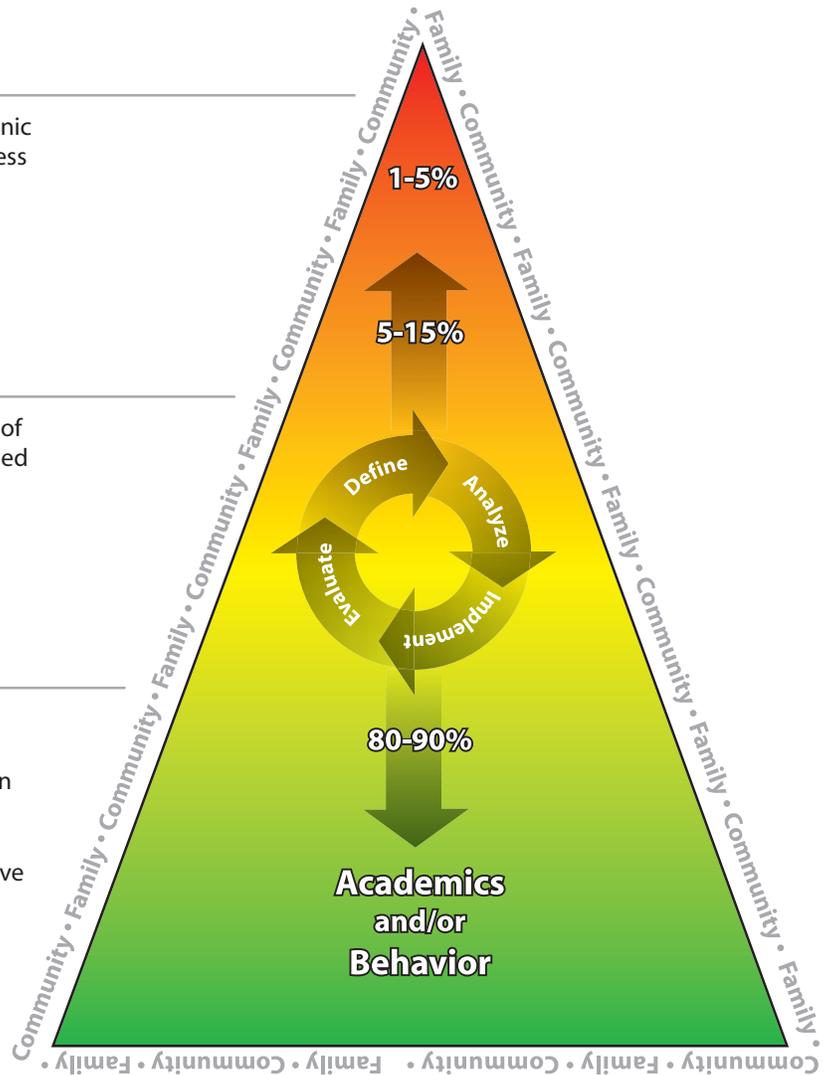
Interventions are provided to students with intensive/chronic academic and/or behavior needs based on ongoing progress monitoring and/or diagnostic assessment.

### Targeted Level

Interventions are provided to students identified as at-risk of academic and/or social challenges and/or students identified as underachieving who require specific supports to make sufficient progress in general education.

### Universal Level

ALL students receive research-based, high quality, general education that incorporates ongoing universal screening, progress monitoring, and prescriptive assessment to design instruction. Expectations are taught, reinforced, and monitored in all settings by all adults. Discipline and other data inform the design of interventions that are preventative and proactive.



## Instructional Strategies and Interventions

Tier 1 refers to classroom instruction for all students. This universal level of instruction should meet the needs of at least 80% of the students. At this level all students are receiving research-based instruction that is high quality. Core instruction should be implemented with fidelity utilizing a curriculum that is viable, rigorous, relevant and standards-driven. Core instruction should also offer sufficient depth, breadth, and complexity to meet the needs of all students in a classroom. Tier I also includes universal supports that are available to all students in academics and behavior. All teachers routinely use a variety of supports as soon as a student begins to struggle in their classroom. For example, teachers' strategies may include small groups, differentiated instruction for application of skills and concept formation, re-teaching, enrichment, and/or additional practice. Teachers may change their method of instruction, provide the child with additional help, as well as provide accommodations or modifications.

*So for us, it's really made us focus about how does our instruction look and what is our program. It's made us really look at every level, the reading, the writing and math piece, and at the universal level. Is the instruction effective?*

*—Elementary Principal John Cramer*

## Assessment

Assessment is an important component of Tier I, as well. Assessment includes class, grade, and/or district-wide screening and progress monitoring. All schools should have a process for routinely reviewing all students' progress through district-level and building-level universal screening tools. Screening measures, although brief, can provide an initial indication of which students are entering the school year at-risk for academic difficulties because they are lagging in the development of critical academic skills or students who have exceeded benchmarks and need a challenge. Valid and reliable screening tests can help teachers differentiate their instruction based on what students already know and can do. Teachers, administrators and building teams reviewing screening and progress monitoring data for all students should utilize a systematic process of discussing data so that effective adjustments to instruction can be made.



*Joe is in 6th grade and participating in all content area instruction in general education. Joe has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and is identified as having significant hearing loss. Joe requires the use of an assisted hearing device in order for him to access the curriculum. Joe utilizes a personal FM system during classroom instruction and when working in group settings. Although, Joe has an IEP to meet his learning needs due to his disability, Joe makes sufficient progress with Tier I instruction. This is a good example of the importance of identifying what level of curriculum and instruction individual students with IEPs need.*

*Mary is in 1st grade and attends a school with a very diverse population. The school has 70% free and reduced lunch student population and is considered a low-performing school based on the SAR report. The school is a Reading First school and utilizes the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment to benchmark and progress monitor. At the beginning of Mary's first grade year, her performance on the DIBELS indicates that she is an Intensive reader and needs support with phonics and phonemic awareness. The teacher utilizes specific instructional strategies to focus on phonics and phonemic awareness and provides specific skill builders for the parents to work on at home. Because Mary's score falls in the intensive range, the teacher begins progress monitoring Mary every other week. As the teacher collects data using DIBELS, Mary shows steady progress. The classroom teacher continues to provide instructional strategies, and when Mary participates in the mid-year benchmark, she is identified as a Strategic learner.*

## Instructional Strategies and Intervention

Tier II includes individualized, targeted supports for students with more significant academic and/or behavior concerns or who have been identified as underachieving. If a student continues to demonstrate insufficient progress and the gap between the student's achievement and expected achievement increases, a more intensive intervention plan can be put in place with the assistance of the problem-solving team through data-driven dialogue. Evidence-based instructional strategies and strengths-based interventions in Tier II are developed based on the student's specific learning and/or behavioral needs. Multiple school personnel can provide the interventions to the students, including the classroom teacher, intervention specialist, related service providers, or other staff.

## Assessment

Assessment is more intense and focused in Tier II. Assessments given need to be based on specific skill need, and results of the assessment should lead directly to intervention. Once an intervention is in place, the response to the intervention needs to be monitored on a regular basis (i.e., every other week, at least). If the academic or behavior need is difficult to identify, a diagnostic assessment (whether formal or informal) may be necessary to determine the focus of the intervention. When selecting assessments at Tier II, the focus should be on identifying the specific skills that need additional work and how best to meet the academic or behavior needs. Discussions about student progress in Tier II will take place formally in problem-solving team meetings; however, informal discussions should take place on a weekly basis with the progress monitor and interventionist.

Tier II curriculum and instruction has a two-fold purpose:

- To remediate specific skill or concept deficits of students who are not making adequate academic gains or have mild to moderate difficulties in the area of social competence. This Tier II instruction is explicit, systematic, and aligned with Tier I curriculum and instruction. Instructional interventions are differentiated, scaffolded, and targeted based on the needs of individual students as determined by assessment data.
- To enrich and enhance the education of students who have demonstrated proficiency in the benchmarks of the standards for a given discipline. This Tier II instruction should contain sufficient depth, breadth, and complexity to increase individual student skills and concept formation in a determined course of study.

*Timmy is 5 years old and is in kindergarten. His teacher notices that he picks up books and reads the words. He often misbehaves during the lessons that involve learning letter sounds. He has a large storehouse of knowledge in a variety of topics with the most interest in dinosaurs. He demonstrates typical fine motor skills and average writing skills. The teacher has identified that he appears to be reading at a second-grade level based on informal testing. The teacher refers the student to the problem-solving team for support in meeting the academic and behavioral needs for Timmy. Initially, the team decides to utilize a resource teacher to try cluster grouping within the kindergarten classroom. The cluster will allow for more individualized instruction. The resource teacher will keep a daily record of Timmy's behavior and discussions with parents will begin on possible acceleration options. This is an example of the problem-solving process meeting the needs of an student with accelerated learning needs.*

*John, a 10th grade student, reads on a 4th grade level based on district assessment. John performed at the Unsatisfactory level in all CSAP tested areas in 9th grade. When John enrolled at the beginning of 10th grade, his counselor registered him for a double block that included the standard literature class with team teaching as well as a focused literacy block with a class size of 12. This is an example of a standard protocol, students who demonstrate significantly low reading skills and who meet the school-identified criteria are registered for the double block to meet both the literature requirement and remediate the skill deficit.*

*Amy is in 2nd grade and has difficulty following directions. Because escalating behaviors occur when Amy chooses not to follow directions she is removed from class. She is often not safe. She will attempt to kick other students. Currently, Amy has a behavior report card. The problem-solving team decides to intensify the intervention by including a reward contract and a peer mentor. The reward contract consists of a reward menu for following directions at four different times during the day with feedback and self monitoring. Amy's behavior will be monitored by her classroom teacher with support from the designated consultant assigned to her plan.*

## Instructional Strategies and Intervention

Tier III intensive supports are intended for students with significant and/or chronic deficits as well as for students with significant underachievement who require the most intensive services available in a school. Moving to a Tier III intervention is determined by the problem-solving team after several individualized interventions have resulted in limited progress, based on the achievement gap between the student's progress and the expected benchmark. The interventions in Tier III are skill specific interventions that can be delivered by a variety of providers. The interventions increase in intensity and often require one-on-one or small group instruction (e.g., 3–5 students). The specific nature of the interventions is based on progress-monitoring data and/or diagnostic assessment information. Interventions are more likely to occur outside the general classroom than at the two previous levels. It may even require that students have a separate curriculum that is focused on accelerating learning.

*The key to the pyramid of intervention for us has been making sure that we are active in adjusting things that aren't working, changing things when we need to. It's far more flexible and dynamic than things used to be in education.*  
—High School Principal Jill Martin

*Molly is a middle school student who is two years ahead of peers her age in math content standards. The problem-solving team utilizes curriculum-based measures, district and state data to determine the level of instruction for Molly. Molly is also asked to provide information about interests and preferences for exploratory blocks and electives. The problem-solving team, which includes Molly's parents, determines that Molly would benefit from advanced geometry with an individualized program. Molly is asked to provide daily reflections through journaling about her experience in the geometry program. The problem-solving team identifies course-curriculum assessments as a way to validate Molly's progress. Performance rubrics are designed to rate performance on math tasks, creativity in responses, career awareness, and critical thinking in mathematical reasoning.*

*Maria is in 3rd grade. She is identified as an English Language Learner; however, she has not participated in English as a Second Language (ESL) programming since kindergarten. Maria was referred for special education services in 2nd grade for concerns in reading. She did not qualify as having a Specific Learning Disability. Maria was referred to the problem-solving team for continued concerns with reading and the designated consultant looked at all previous assessment data, collected current testing information, and consulted with the teacher. Maria was currently reading 110 words a minute on Oral Reading Fluency; however, she appeared to have great difficulty in comprehension and interacting during whole group instruction. The problem-solving team determined that they did not have the right information to determine what interventions would improve reading comprehension and participation during whole group instruction. It was clear that Maria did not have a decoding or fluency issue, but the direct problem was unclear. The school psychologist decided to give the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT)-4 and the Comprehensive Reception and Expressive Vocabulary Test (CREVT). Nothing significant was indicated on the GORT-4, but the CREVT results indicated that Maria's expressive and receptive vocabulary was at the pre-k level. This is when her ESL programming ended. The problem-solving team put an intensive, one-on-one, direct instruction vocabulary intervention in place 3 days a week.*

Therefore, Tier III curriculum and instruction (academic and/or behavior) serve many purposes:

- To provide interventions for students who have not responded adequately to one or more rounds of Tier II supplemental, targeted curriculum and instruction. This small percentage of students usually demonstrate more severe deficits and require curriculum and instruction that is more explicit, more intense, and specifically designed to meet individual needs.
- To provide enrichment and/or advancement in a specific area of study for individual students who have demonstrated exceptional knowledge and skills in a given course of study based on performance and assessment data or who have demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for learning.
- To provide training on student-specific learning needs such as mastering Braille code, auditory training, assistive technology, behavior, etc.

## Assessment

The intensity of assessment also increases in Tier III. Because of the urgency at this level, the response to intervention in Tier III need to be monitored more frequently. Diagnostic assessments may be given to get a comprehensive look at the student's strengths and areas of need. However, the major purpose of assessment in Tier III is to provide information on how to meet the student's instructional need.

## Questions and Answers about the RtI Model

### What has to exist in order for RtI to work?

RtI is successful when an infrastructure exists to support a problem-solving process which includes intervention development, progress monitoring, and designated meeting times for the problem-solving team. School staff must possess skills in the necessary instructional strategies and interventions as well as assessment tools focusing on screening, progress monitoring, and outcomes. Therefore, school personnel must be provided the training opportunities necessary to gain the skills needed to implement RtI systemwide. Teachers and support staff must have the support of building administrators and district staff to implement the RtI Model. Support provided to teachers must extend throughout the implementation of interventions and the collection of appropriate data to assess student progress.

### What is the criterion for a successful intervention?

An intervention is successful if the achievement gap between the performance of the student at-risk and the expected benchmark has decreased based on the data collected through progress monitoring. Problem-solving teams must collect a body of evidence to determine whether the gap has closed utilizing progress monitoring instruments, such as Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBM), that monitor specific skills and demonstrate incremental change. A CBM is any set of measurement procedures that use direct observation and recording of performance within a given curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions. Curriculum-based measurements assess specific skills presently being taught in the classroom, usually in basic skills.

### How long should interventions be implemented in an RtI Model?

The amount of time necessary to identify and verify effective interventions will vary by skill, the age and the grade level of the student. Interventions should be continued as long as the student exhibits a positive response. The interventions should be modified as appropriate when a student's progress is less than expected.

### Who provides the interventions?

A variety of people may provide interventions in the problem-solving process. In Tier I, classroom teachers should be the primary provider of interventions and strategies. At the Tier II & III level, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, reading teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, school counselors, etc. can provide interventions. The interventionist should be selected based on intensity of intervention, skill level of interventionist, and training required to deliver the intervention. Furthermore, each school needs to determine individuals available in the building to provide interventions, what training each individual has had, and the individual's time availability who will be providing interventions.

### Who progress monitors or conducts assessments in the RtI Model?

Many different individuals can progress monitor depending on the tool being used. Because CBM requires minimal training, schools may select multiple individuals to be trained including parents, retired teachers, paraprofessionals, other school personnel, etc. Behavior progress-monitoring data also can be collected by a variety of individuals. Districtwide progress-monitoring instruments may also be used and the data collected may be by district level personnel, classroom teachers, and/or designated building staff. Nonetheless, individuals who are expected to monitor progress should be formally trained to administer the instruments utilized for progress monitoring. Additionally, if administering diagnostic instruments, adequately trained and/or appropriately licensed individuals should be conducting the assessment.

*I don't think this all needs to fall to the shoulders of the teachers. I think when you have an effective problem-solving team in a building, there are many people that can support the teacher in that progress monitoring capacity to enable it to be consistent and to enable it to be a process that's not just a one-person function.*

—School Psychologist Lynette Pfeiffer

### How do students move between Tiers?

Moving between tiers is a fluid process and there will likely be some fluctuation for many students whether they exhibit academic and/or behavioral concerns. Essentially, students move between tiers based on the gap demonstrated through progress monitoring as well as with the intensity level of the intervention.

For example, if a student has a Gap of 3.8, the tier level needs to be more intense than a student who has a Gap of 2.4. (Please see Gap Analysis definition for more information.)

### Is a student ever involved in more than one intervention at a time?

Students should typically participate in one intervention at a time for individual skill deficits. For example, if a student has a deficit in reading, a single problem should be determined and a single intervention should be developed to address the identified problem. However, in some situations a student may be participating in a standard protocol intervention such as a flexible reading group to address reading skills in general, but may also be in a more intense (Tier III) intervention to address the specific skill deficit. Additionally, a student may participate in more than one intervention if there are a variety of skill deficits in different academic or behavior areas. For example, a student may be receiving a behavior intervention and a reading intervention at the same time or a reading intervention and a math intervention at the same time.

### How long might a child be in the problem-solving process?

The length of time a child participates in the problem-solving process depends on the significance of the gap between the student and peers as well as the skill deficits a student has. For example, if a student in 8th grade needs an intervention in math calculations to gain the skills necessary to succeed with Algebra, there may be a need for several specific skill interventions to close the gap with peers. Data may demonstrate that the gap is closing, but the length of time to close the gap may be lengthy. On the other hand, a student who is in 1st grade and needs an intervention addressing short vowels may need a limited Tier II or III intervention and once the skill is gained the gap is closed with peers and the student can participate in the core curriculum. This student's length of participation in the problem-solving process would be limited.

### What documentation is used with the RtI Model?

Graphs and charts are a basic component of RtI documentation. Furthermore, schools should document the assessment and intervention strategies and outcomes using data collection systems. The strategies that are utilized and charted data should produce documentation of a student's progress or lack of progress (e.g., graphs, charts).

### How is RtI funded?

This is a local decision. Because RtI requires the school to use staff, time and materials differently schools and districts are encouraged to reconsider how general funds are expended as this initiative is launched. There are several federal formula grants that can support efforts. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 allows for up to 15% of Part B allocation to be used for early intervening services. Title I schools that operate a schoolwide program have quite a bit of flexibility and should be able to align supports easily in an RtI approach.

### Is RtI just a way to avoid providing special education services?

No. RtI is a way to integrate the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and IDEA so that all students receive high quality, effective instruction in the general education setting and beyond. Also, RtI is a framework of instruction for students who do receive special education services. The intent is to generate a seamless system of support that is available to all students at the first sign of need.

*The typical child study process, the traditional model, is one where the essential question is: Should the student be referred to special education? The problem-solving model may look at eligibility for special education but has a much more immediate impact on what this student needs right now in terms of services and support.*

—Assistant Commissioner Ed Steinberg

### Can RtI be used for students who are Gifted and Talented and/or underachieving?

Absolutely, not only can RtI be used, but should be used for students identified as Gifted and Talented or underachieving. Students who are Gifted and Talented and are underachieving based on screening measures and progress-monitoring tools should be provided strength-based intervention to increase the potential for sufficient progress. Because the RtI Model is a systemwide model, all students who are making insufficient progress should be provided more intensive interventions based on their individual needs. Gifted students need strength-based tiered interventions based on programming needs. Gifted students with learning difficulties will also need interventions for skill deficits.

## How does a Problem-Solving Team differ from an Eligibility Group?

The problem-solving team focus is specifically on creating strategies and interventions to help children be more successful academically and behaviorally. Classroom teachers are central and highly valued members of a problem-solving team. The problem-solving team promotes a collegial atmosphere where teachers work together to solve student problems and use dependable and efficient assessment methods to measure the progress of struggling learners.

An eligibility group is responsible for identifying students who may have educational disabilities and be eligible for Special Education services. Eligibility groups have typically been comprised of specialists, including school psychologists, speech therapists, nurses, special education teachers, etc. With RtI, eligibility groups will continue to be important to ensure necessary data are collected when considering eligibility. However, the majority of information is likely to be gathered during the problem-solving process. Other information such as observations, possible diagnostic assessments, or other informal measures may be requested by the eligibility group. This constitutes a full and individual evaluation. The eligibility group may include a portion of the problem-solving team as well as any additional individuals important to the evaluation process.

## How/what do we communicate to parents?

Regardless of whether the parent initiated a concern or the teacher initiated a concern, parent involvement is critical and should be facilitated throughout the process, beginning with the problem identification phase. Parents should always be invited to the problem-solving meetings, and if parents are unable to attend the meeting the progress-monitoring information should be provided to the parents each time the data are analyzed. Parents should be involved in all the decisions regarding modifications to interventions and related changes to a student's curriculum.

## Do I have to use the RtI Model to determine eligibility for students who are identified as having a Specific Learning Disability?

To align with federal laws and regulations, CDE has revised the Exceptional Children's Education Act to require eligibility groups to utilize a problem-solving process to determine eligibility for a Specific Learning Disability. The expectation is that the majority of data are collected through the process; however, other data may need to be collected for a full and individual evaluation to qualify a student as having a Specific Learning Disability. The movement is away from eligibility being an event that provides access to needed services to eligibility as a formality with many supports already in place.

## If a parent requests an immediate evaluation within the sixty day time frame during or prior to the problem-solving process, is the school obligated to default to the discrepancy model?

If a parent requests an immediate evaluation, schools should explain the problem-solving process and the services the child will receive during the documentation period. Schools may not talk parents out of requesting an evaluation; however, it is expected that parents will be informed of what the current evaluation practices are. If parents request a traditional assessment, schools will not be expected to administer an IQ and Achievement assessment. Determination of a Specific Learning Disability will be dependent on information collected through a problem-solving process.

## How will the Special Education teacher plan interventions for a student after he or she has been found eligible for services through the RtI process?

The problem-solving team will essentially provide the current intervention plan when a student is eligible for Special Education services. Members of the team will continue to work together until effective interventions have been implemented regardless of the setting in the school within which the student is receiving services.

The above questions are a few general questions regarding some of the components of the RtI Model. Specific questions addressing implementation expectations as well as definitions of key terms are provided in the following section.

# Putting RtI into Practice Systemwide

## Overview of How the RtI Model Works

To support consistency of RtI implementation across the state, in districts, and in schools, identifying the steps involved and providing training to develop skills necessary to support the model is imperative. Each school is expected to create and support a team that utilizes a problem-solving process to meet the academic and behavioral needs for students who are not making sufficient progress (at-risk or underachieving). Problem-solving team meetings should be scheduled regularly in each school (weekly to bi-monthly). By providing a strong problem-solving process with ongoing progress monitoring for assessing the success of targeted and intensive research-based interventions, more students will have the opportunity to be academically and behaviorally successful. Circumventing the process to move students to Tier III or referring a student for a Special Education evaluation without following the problem-solving process is not supported and should happen only under special circumstances that will be covered later in the manual.

## Important Definitions and Key Components

There are several aspects of the RtI Model that are important to understand before implementation can be made systemwide. The following definitions will be helpful in understanding the key components of the RtI Model.

*We monitor, we plan, we teach. If a child is not responding, then we need to adjust our instruction to make sure a child is successful.*

—Elementary Principal John Cramer

## Key Components and Definitions

- Problem-Solving Team
- Problem-Solving Process
- Progress Monitoring
- Curriculum-Based Measurement
- Gap Analysis
- Instructional Strategy
- Research-Based Interventions and Research-Based Practice
- Instructional Intervention
- Standard Protocol Interventions
- Skilled Discussion
- Data-Driven Dialogue

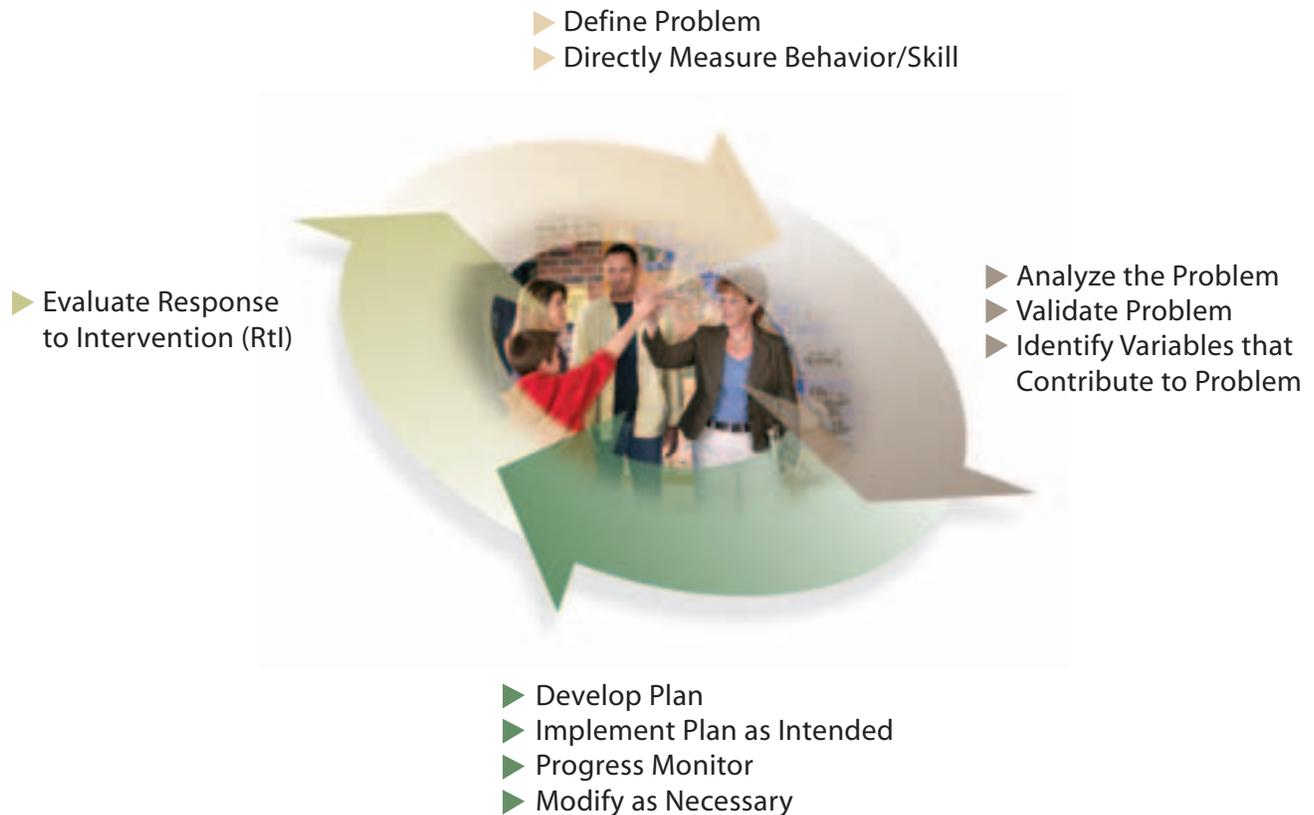
## Problem-Solving Team

Diverse representation and collegiality are essential elements of successful problem-solving teams. Teams must be composed of a variety of educational staff, including teachers, specialists, administrators, and parents. Team membership should include individuals who have a diverse set of skills and expertise that can address a variety of behavioral and academic needs. The team should also be collegial in that teachers are supported and encouraged throughout the process. Problem-solving teams should identify a facilitator who guides the process and ensures a supportive atmosphere. A recorder and timekeeper also are important roles on a problem-solving team. Finally, designated consultants or case managers are essential to the follow through of problem-solving teams.



## Problem-Solving Process

A problem-solving process includes a structured format when analyzing possible reasons for a student’s academic or behavioral needs and planning interventions. Utilizing a structured problem-solving approach when exploring, defining, and prioritizing a teacher’s concerns helps the team make efficient use of time and increases the probability that it will select the right intervention(s).



*RtI is really as dynamic as students are, and changes depending on the needs of those students. It's a great way of addressing the fact that the solution might be different for every individual kid. It gives us the tools to figure out what that solution is.*  
—High School Principal Jill Martin

### ▶ Define the Problem \_\_\_\_\_

The problem should be stated in objective, measurable terms, using direct measures of academics and/or behavior. The definition of the problem must focus on teachable skills that can be measured and can be changed through the process of instruction.

Problems can be defined as the difference between what is observed/measured and an expectation for a student. Expectations can be developed based on either local norms, normative standards, criterion-based measures, peer performance, instructional standards, developmental standards, district or state assessments and/or teacher expectations. For example, a second grade student may be

reading 21 words per minute (wpm), while the classroom norm may be 32 wpm. Thus, defining a problem involves articulating an accepted expectation.

It also is important to understand whether the identified problem exists for only one student, a small group of students, or a large group of students since this knowledge will lead to different types of interventions. For large group problems, changes in overall curriculum and instruction may be necessary and problem solving is then conducted on a large scale. On the other hand, if a problem is present for only one or a very few students, individual problem solving can take place.

The classroom teacher, typically, collects data about the student’s performance, including information gathered from the parents, and brings the information to a problem-solving team meeting at the beginning of the process.

## ► Analyze the Problem

The goal of problem analysis is to answer the question, “Why is this problem occurring?” During this step, the relevant information about the problem is gathered and considered, potential hypotheses about the probable causes of the problem are described, and information is gathered to either confirm or disprove the hypotheses.

Gathering information may involve further examination of classroom products, information provided by the parents, observations in the instructional setting, focused assessments, or examination of data from other district or state assessments.

When the underlying cause is determined, the team may explore evidence-based interventions that are relevant. Some questions for the team to ask in analyzing the problem include:

- Has the student received quality instruction in the target skill?
- Does the curriculum support the development of the target skill?
- Does the school environment support the acquisition and application of the target skill?

## ► Develop and Implement the Plan

The goal of step 3 is to develop an instructional/ intervention plan that matches the identified student need and has the most likelihood of success.

A good intervention plan:

- explicitly defines the skills to be taught;
- focuses on measurable objectives;
- defines who will complete various tasks, when and how;
- describes a plan for measuring and monitoring effectiveness of instructional efforts (including a quantifiable baseline and target goal for the skill to be developed);
- reflects the resources available.

The plan must also be monitored for fidelity of implementation. Therefore, the team must specify who will do this and how often.

Collecting data on how the student is progressing (progress monitoring) is another essential component of implementing the plan. The team should determine at the outset how progress monitoring will occur and what measures will be used. For example, for behavioral interventions time sampling or other direct behavioral

measures may be used, while academic interventions may utilize curriculum based measures.

## ► Evaluate the Response to Intervention

Progress monitoring is a methodology for measuring the effectiveness of an intervention. The goal of progress monitoring is to answer the question, “Is the instruction/ intervention working?” If an intervention is not delivering the desired results, the intervention should be changed. Thus, a key feature of the methods used to collect data is that they can be administered frequently and are sensitive to small changes in skill levels.

By plotting skill levels on a graph, trends in student performance can be visualized more easily.

The team should then:

- Determine how the progress monitoring data will be managed/ graphed (e.g., commercial web-based program such as DIBELS or AIMSweb, Excel, ChartDog, etc.);
- Decide who will do the progress monitoring and how often it will be done;
- Set logical data review timelines based upon the intervention(s);
- Determine, based on data, whether the intervention or goal needs to be modified.

*The team develops a plan to support that student. How they are going to collect data, how they are going to progress monitor, who is going to provide the intervention, and then there is a consultation piece that happens after the meeting is over.*  
—CDE RtI Consultant Montana Romero

If an intervention is not producing the desired results, a first step is to evaluate whether the intervention is being implemented as designed. If not, adjustments should be made to ensure treatment integrity.

Teams should also consider whether the intensity of an intervention needs to be increased by either; 1) reducing the size of the group; 2) increasing the amount of time/frequency that the intervention is delivered or 3) narrowing the focus of the instruction.

In summary, problem-solving is a self-correcting, decision-making model focused on academic and/or behavioral intervention development and monitoring using frequently collected, measurable data on student performance. The problem-solving process should be rich in data collected and can be repeated as necessary.

## Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a systematic method for tracking and comparing an individual's or group's performance and progress through data collection. A consistent monitoring plan is essential to determine effectiveness of instructional programs and interventions. Movement of a student within the intervention tiers is determined by the data collected through progress monitoring. Progress monitoring is the way in which a multidisciplinary team can gather the data used to make decisions during the problem-solving process. Progress monitoring varies depending on the level of intensity. For students at the Tier I level, progress monitoring is provided to all students using on-going universal screening and assessments aligned with instruction. Students who are receiving more intensive intervention in Tiers II and III should be provided more strategic and targeted progress monitoring. At this level, progress monitoring should be focused on current levels of performance. The tools utilized should be flexible, efficient, accessible, and informative.



## Curriculum-Based Measurement

The most effective assessment available for monitoring student progress on a specific skill is Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM). CBM is an alternative to other procedures that may be too costly, time consuming, disruptive to instruction, or ineffective for identifying progress frequently. CBM is comprised of standard directions, materials, scoring rules, and is a timed assessment. CBM is characterized by several attributes:

1. **Alignment**—students are tested on the curriculum being taught.
2. **Technically adequate**—CBM has established reliability and validity.
3. **Criterion-referenced**—CBM is used to determine if students can demonstrate their knowledge by reaching specified performance levels on certain tasks.
4. **Standard procedures are used to administer CBM.**
5. **Performance sampling**—CBM employs direct, low-inference measures through which correct and incorrect student behaviors, on clearly defined tasks, are counted within a set time interval.
6. **Decision rules are in place to provide those who use the data with information about what it means when students score at different levels of performance or illustrate different rates of progress on the measures over time.**
7. **Repeated Measurement**—CBM can be used over time and to identify insufficient progress as well as level of performance.
8. **Efficient**—Training is minimal and measures can be given quickly.
9. **Summarized efficiently**—a variety of techniques are available that make data accessible to classroom teachers and students.

## Gap Analysis

A critical component of determining a student's response to an intervention as well as the appropriate intensity level of an intervention is addressed through conducting a Gap Analysis. A Gap Analysis is determined by dividing the expected benchmark by the current student performance. The following steps provide a structure for determining the gap along with a method of determining realistic growth expectations.

### EXAMPLE:

A student in second grade is reading 20 words per minute (wpm) based on an Oral Reading Fluency probe, given during the winter screening.

1. Determine the current benchmark expectation. For the above student the benchmark is 68 words per minute for winter.

### To determine the Gap:

2. Divide 68 wpm (the expected benchmark) by 20 wpm (the current performance)  $68/20 = 3.4$

The Gap the student has to close by the end of the year is 3.4.

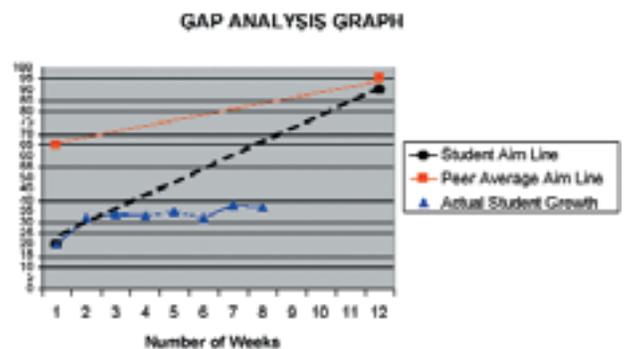
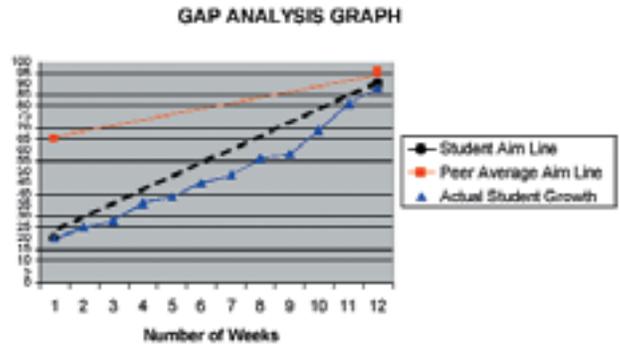
3. Determine if the Gap is significant. A Gap above 2.0 is often considered significant.

*The next phase of Gap analysis determines what sufficient progress is necessary to close the Gap. (For the above student significant intervention is needed to attempt to close the Gap because the gap is more than 2.0.)*

4. Determine the gain the student needs to make to close the Gap. To identify the necessary gain subtract the student's current performance from the expected benchmark in the next benchmark period.

For the above student the calculation is as follows: 90 wpm (benchmark in the spring) - 20 wpm (student's current performance) = 70 wpm (necessary to close the gap).

5. At this point, the problem-solving team determines what progress is realistic for the student. 70 wpm (necessary gain) divided by 15 (number of weeks for intervention) = 4.6 wpm (weekly gain needed)



The problem-solving team determines whether this is a realistic goal for the student. The team may decide to determine the number of weeks needed to close the gap based on a reasonable weekly gain. For example if the student is expected to gain 3 wpm a week then the team could divide 70 wpm (necessary gain) by 3 wpm (weekly gain) to establish the length of intervention as 23 weeks.

Gap Analysis needs to be conducted regularly throughout the intervention to determine sufficient progress and response to intervention.

The above graphs demonstrate an academic example utilizing Gap Analysis.

## Instructional Strategy

A strategy is a tool, plan, or method used for accomplishing a task. Strategies can be utilized within instructional settings throughout the school day. Teachers can use instructional strategies to guide and improve student learning. Students and teachers should utilize specific learning strategies to accomplish short- and long-term goals and objectives.



## Research-Based Interventions and Research-Based Practice

A research-based intervention is an intervention that produces reliable and valid data that suggests when the intervention is used with a particular group of students adequate gains can be expected. To be considered a research-based intervention in the RtI Model, the instructional program, instructional practices and strategies must be school-based, prescriptive, and have a clear record of success.

Effective interventions are:

- supported by school staff, including administrators;
- based in theory and are developmentally appropriate;
- designed to impact the factors that are thought to lead to the problem;
- integrated with other interventions;
- supported with sufficient time & energy to address the problem;
- implemented by people who have had sufficient training;
- implemented with fidelity;
- monitored to ensure that individual student outcome improves.

## Instructional Intervention

Interventions can be strategies and/or activities that are implemented to help students progress toward academic or behavioral goals. Interventions vary depending on the intensity and need. Individual interventions should be developed based on the unique needs of students. Furthermore, interventions that have been researched to have the greatest chance of addressing the area of need should be selected. This will ensure that there is a high probability of success once the intervention is implemented.

## Standard Protocol Interventions

Standard protocol interventions are intensive, short-term instructional interventions that follow a specified script and have research to support its effectiveness. They are typically conducted with a small group of targeted students using materials that supplement the general education curriculum. Standard Protocol Interventions are research-based, have a high probability of producing change, are used in a standard manner among student groups, and can be orchestrated by a team. Furthermore, progress monitoring occurs at designated times to determine the effectiveness of the intervention as well as any changes in grouping or curriculum.

## Skilled Discussion

Skilled discussion supports clarity of thought and commitment to action. For discussions to be productive, teachers and instructional support staff need to understand the purpose of the interaction. Skilled discussion seeks focus and closure on a set of actions. Participants must balance promoting their ideas with equal attention to understanding the ideas of others. Norms should also be developed in skilled discussions that allow members to sort and analyze data, information, and suggestions. Furthermore, skilled discussion requires clarity about the decision-making process that will focus actions, and ensure that all participants understand the implications and consequences of decisions.

## Data-Driven Dialogue

When educators look into classroom-based issues and concerns, collect and analyze data from a variety of sources, and establish plans for change, the RtI Model has the greatest probability of success. Data are most helpful when they are used for self-assessment and combined with reflection, problem-solving, and discovery. Data-driven dialogue is a collective process designed to share common understandings of issues and events using information from a variety of sources. Data-driven dialogue requires changes in the working culture of groups and is a collaborative learning cycle. Curriculum decisions, instruction scheduling, and student groupings should all be made through data-driven dialogue. CDE will support the implementation and training on data-driven dialogue.

*We no longer can afford to say, "Well, I think the child is learning or improving or progressing." We have to have data around that so that we can also look at every child and say here are the strengths, and here are the things we need to work on, and here are the interventions and strategies we can use to help that child.*

—Superintendent Mike Miles

# Important Roles and Expectations

## District Administrators

District administrators have a vital role in the implementation of RtI. Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Directors of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education, etc. must demonstrate an understanding of RtI as well as monitor building-level implementation. District administrators' most important role when implementing RtI is to help schools recognize that many services that schools provide on a daily basis fit under the umbrella of RtI. District administrators must provide the leadership support necessary to implement RtI with fidelity. Building administrators should be able to rely on district administrators to provide practical models and examples as well as provide the technology and other supports vital to RtI implementation. Furthermore, district level leadership should recognize and vocalize the relationship between RtI and student achievement.

### Key expectations of District Administrators:

- Align current practices that are functions of RtI
- Provide practical models
- Provide technology and other support important to implementation
- Recognize and vocalize the relationship between RtI and student achievement
- Support professional development



## Building Administrators

Because systems change requires significant leadership, building administrators must take the lead in ensuring positive change as well as incorporating staff development needs into the building action plan. Even though administrators may designate other school personnel to participate in the problem-solving team meetings, administrators are expected to attend the meetings at least monthly to support the process as well as identify any needs of the team. Building administrators also are responsible for selecting problem-solving team members who will work collaboratively in a problem-solving manner. Administrators should carefully consider the school culture in making assignments to the team and in providing the appropriate professional development to all staff. Furthermore, principals need to support necessary schedule changes as well as identify scheduling needs to support problem-solving teams and intervention delivery.

### Key expectations of Building Administrators:

- Attend problem-solving team meetings at-least monthly
- Dialogue with the problem-solving team regularly
- Monitor integrity of interventions
- Monitor integrity of data



The principal's active support of the process must be evidenced by vocal support, by resources the principal makes available to the process and, most importantly, by active participation on the team.

## Teachers

A significant purpose of the RtI Model is to provide instruction and curriculum in the general education classroom that allows the majority of students to be proficient and meet content standards. Therefore, teachers play a central role in the RtI Model when it is implemented system-wide. Teachers are curriculum experts who are expected to plan and implement instruction. Specifically at the Tier I level, teachers are expected to identify students who are not making sufficient progress and implement effective strategies and interventions (differentiated instruction, specific reading strategies, flexible grouping, etc.) that are intended to improve the student's performance. Furthermore, teachers should utilize progress monitoring tools to identify whether the identified strategies and interventions are working. An important component of teachers' responsibility at Tier I is to collect, utilize and discuss data with their colleagues to improve student performance.



When a student is not responding to the universal interventions in Tier I, teachers should talk with the student's parents about the concern and potentially refer the student to the problem-solving team. Teachers are responsible for completing the documentation necessary for the problem-solving team and meeting with the case manager/designated consultant. Also, teachers are expected to inform parents of the meeting and referred concern. The teacher is expected to attend the problem-solving meeting. Additionally, teachers need to support and participate in the intervention plan. This may include providing the intervention, monitoring student progress, communicating with others providing services to the student, and continuing collaboration with the case manager/designated consultant.

## Key Expectations of Teachers:

- Identify students not making sufficient progress or not meeting their potential
- Communicate with parents regarding student progress, identified concern and meeting date
- Complete documentation for problem-solving team
- Collect and discuss data at Tier I with grade-level or content-level teams
- Collaborate with the designated consultant
- Attend problem-solving team meeting
- Support and participate in the intervention plan

## Parents/Families/Guardians

Parents or guardians are an integral part of the RtI Model and problem-solving process. They should participate and be valued when developing intervention plans. Although requiring parents or guardians to attend problem-solving team meetings may not be appropriate, parents should be strongly encouraged to attend. Parents or guardians are encouraged to participate in team meetings and meet with the case manager/designated consultant and/or teacher as appropriate, to provide pertinent information about their child's learning style, difficulty, or area of advancement and to ask questions about their child's progress or lack of progress. Because it may be a new experience for most parents or guardians to be significantly involved in intervention development and progress monitoring, special care must be taken to inform parents or guardians about the steps in the process to ensure engagement.

## Key expectations of Parents or Guardians:

- Collaborate with teachers regarding identified need
- Share information about child and family as appropriate
- Support student learning at home
- Attend problem-solving team meeting and partner in intervention planning and progress monitoring

*Implementing Response to Intervention, even though the concepts are very basic common sense, is going to be a major challenge in terms of our practitioners, our special education teachers, our general education teachers, our psychologists, many people who work in the schools basically learning a new way of doing their jobs.*

—Assistant Commissioner Ed Steinberg



## Problem-Solving Team Composition

The problem-solving team should be composed of professionals from multiple perspectives, although the composition for any given student will be flexible given the area(s) of concern.

The team is recommended to include:

- Parents
- Classroom teacher(s) (this depends on student)
- General education teachers (number depends on building composition)
- Special education teachers (number depends on building composition)
- School psychologist
- School administrator

The team may include when needed:

- Building level specialists (depending on the area of expertise):
- Curriculum Support Team members/Reading specialists
- School counselor/School social workers
- Behavior Specialist/Positive Behavior Support team member
- Speech language pathologists
- Title I or reading/Math specialist
- Hearing teacher
- Vision teacher
- English Language Learner teacher
- Gifted & Talented specialist
- Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist
- Nurse

## Role Expectations—Problem-Solving Team Members

Each building must assign certain staff to support the RtI Model. Primarily, schools must assign an RtI Coordinator who will oversee the problem-solving process and ensure the integrity and consistency of the RtI Model in their building. Principals should assign individual(s) who will be integral to their Problem-Solving Team and who can provide guidance and support to the team members.

*We know that kids come to school with lots of challenges. I think teachers ought to be most excited to say, "I have partners now to deal with the challenges." Just think about in a classroom of one teacher and 25 kids, and those kids are very different and very unique, and some come with some very unique challenges. Well, you're not alone. You're not by yourself. You have a team of folks that are going to come together to meet each kid's needs.*

—Commissioner Dwight Jones

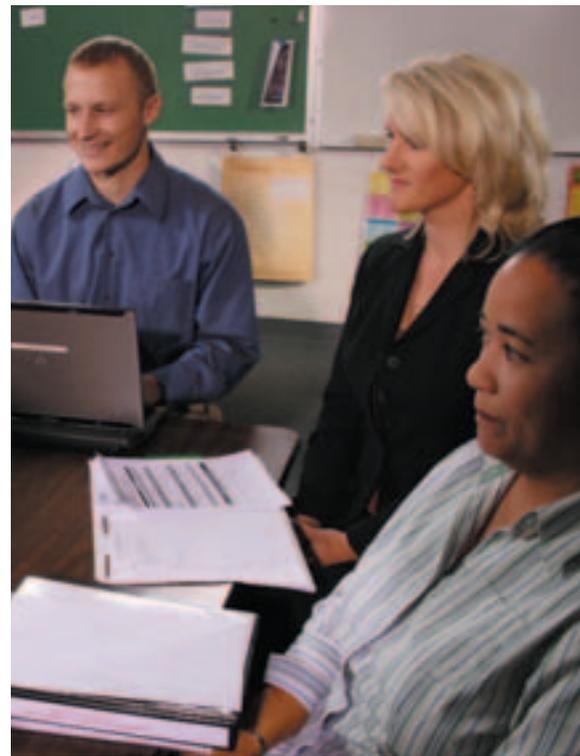


## RtI Coordinator

The RtI coordinator is expected to monitor the day-to-day operations of the process and any district-level trainings and meetings that support districtwide implementation. The RtI coordinator is responsible for collecting and reviewing documentation forms for the problem-solving team and determining which case manager/designated consultant will be assigned to the case. The coordinator notifies teachers about the days, times and locations of meetings and coordinates any specialists who need to attend the meeting. Furthermore, the RtI coordinator is responsible for ensuring that data is collected, including progress monitoring, RtI plans, and numbers of students in Tiers II and III, as well as students who are referred for a special education evaluation.

### Key expectations of RtI Coordinator:

- Monitor and organize problem-solving process, including scheduling meetings
- Attend district coordinator meetings
- Collect documentation forms
- Assign Case Manager/Designated Consultant/Coach



## Meeting Facilitator

The meeting facilitator may be the RtI Coordinator or may be another individual on the problem-solving team who has the skill set necessary for facilitating efficient meetings. The meeting facilitator must have a strong working knowledge of the problem-solving process, as well as effective facilitation skills which include keeping all individuals who attend the meeting informed and focused on developing an intervention plan, encouraging participation from others, helping redirect the dialogue if the discussion gets off task, clarifying and summarizing information being communicated during the meeting. An important responsibility of the meeting facilitator is to establish and maintain a supportive and collaborative atmosphere. The meeting facilitator also attempts to resolve conflicts that may emerge during the meeting as well as to support team agreement when appropriate. Although this role may be challenging, it is a valued and imperative role in ensuring fidelity of the problem-solving process.

### Key expectations of Meeting Facilitator:

- Facilitate and focus meetings
- Maintain a collaborative atmosphere
- Resolve conflicts



## Recorder

The recorder is responsible for completing the RtI plan at the problem-solving team meetings which include meeting notes. The recorder is expected to capture the important information shared at the meeting as well as ensure that all areas of the intervention plan are addressed including: intervention information, progress monitoring information, the Gap Analysis, and future meeting dates. The recorder may need to interrupt the meeting to ask for clarification and remind the team about components on the RtI plan. Some schools may utilize a computer during the meetings to immediately display the plan, which allows for greater understanding and awareness.

### Key expectations of Recorder:

- Complete RtI Plan
- Remind team about RtI Plan components
- Record meeting minutes

## Time Keeper

The time keeper is essential in making certain that meeting times are respected. Because many decisions need to be made during meetings, the team must stay on task and always be cognizant of time. The time keeper should monitor the team's use of time and remind the team when time is limited in each stage of the meeting.

### Key expectations of Time Keeper:

- Monitor meeting time and remind team of time limits

## Case Manager/Designated Consultant/Coach

The case manager/designated consultant/coach is a role specific to the problem-solving team. This individual links the classroom teacher to the problem-solving team and is a critical component of the RtI Model. The majority of problem-solving team members are expected to act as a case manager/designated consultant/coach for select cases. Furthermore, all case managers/designated consultants/coaches should be trained with the consultation training module. His/her most important function is to support the teacher throughout the problem-solving process. The case manager/designated consultant/coach may be asked to help the teacher complete the documentation forms necessary for the problem-solving team, assist the teacher in collecting student data before the initial problem-solving meeting, as well as inform the teacher about the problem-solving

process. The case manager/designated consultant/coach should meet with the teacher prior to the initial meeting to determine the specific student need that will be addressed in the initial meeting as well as what factors may be contributing to the problem. They may also need to connect with the family to gain the family's perception as well as pertinent information about the student's need. The expectation is that case managers/designated consultants/coach utilize effective consultation skills as well as take the time necessary to complete the first two steps of the problem-solving process which are defining and analyzing the problem. This allows the initial meeting to be manageable when developing the intervention plan. Additionally, the case manager/designated consultant/coach is expected to communicate on a weekly basis (at a minimum) with the referring teacher, interventionist, and progress monitor to ensure that the intervention plan is implemented as designed and is effective. The case manager/designated consultant/coach may need to work with the referring teacher to adjust the intervention plan prior to the next meeting; however, if significant concerns arise or significant changes need to be made, the case manager/designated consultant/coach can request an additional meeting for further discussion.

### Key expectations of Case Manager/Designated Consultant/Coach:

- Inform teacher about the problem-solving process
- Support referring teacher throughout the process
- Help teacher complete documentation forms if necessary
- Collect needed data prior to meeting
- Meet with referring teacher to define the problem prior to the meeting
- Communicate on a weekly basis with referring teacher, interventionist and/or progress monitor
- Provide interventions when appropriate
- Progress Monitor when appropriate



## Interventionist

When a student is referred to the problem-solving team for a targeted intervention, an intervention plan is established. The intervention to be put in place and the individual providing the intervention are central to the plan. The interventionist may be a variety of individuals in the system, including the classroom teacher, special education teacher, Title I teacher, Gifted and Talented specialist, paraprofessional, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, etc. Although speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapist, hearing and vision teachers, nurses, etc. should be consulted when developing interventions in select cases, their role in providing the intervention as part of their case load should only be considered in the most significant cases and only with the specialist's input. Interventionists should be adequately trained to provide the intervention selected, should have the resources including time and materials, and should be expected to implement the intervention with fidelity. Also key to an interventionist's role is to communicate on a regular basis with the classroom teacher and the case manager/designated consultant/coach as well as the RtI Coordinator, as necessary.

### Key expectations of Interventionist:

- Provide interventions with fidelity
- Communicate with classroom teacher and case manager/designated consultant/coach on a weekly basis about intervention effectiveness

## Progress Monitor

Another vital component of the intervention plan is the individual responsible for progress monitoring. The progress monitor, first and foremost, must have an understanding of the progress monitoring tools available and the purposes for each tool. Training on administering and scoring Curriculum-based Measurement (CBM) as well as training on graphing and Gap Analysis is expected for individuals identified as progress monitors. Progress monitors can include teachers, paraprofessionals, retired teachers, support personnel, students, etc. Additionally, progress monitors must communicate on a weekly basis with the interventionist, case manager/designated consultant and/or teacher to determine whether the implemented intervention is successful. The progress monitor must also use a graphing system to visually demonstrate progress. The graph is expected to be a tool at the meetings for decision making. There are several methods available for graphing including Excel, AIMSWeb.org, and Chart Dog at [interventioncentral.org](http://interventioncentral.org).

### Key expectations of Progress Monitor:

- Monitor the intervention's progress as directed by RtI plan
- Communicate on a weekly basis with interventionist, case manager/designated consultant/coach and/or teacher
- Graph progress

## School Psychologists

School psychologists are experiencing a significant role change that focuses more on targeted assessment and support. Although the role of the school psychologist varies somewhat in every district, school psychologists are expected to play an active role in the implementation of the RtI Model, as well as be an active member on the problem-solving team. School psychologists have considerable skills in the area of consultation, problem-solving, assessment, and systems change that lend themselves directly to the implementation of RtI. School psychologists are expected to support buildings in developing problem-solving teams that are effective and efficient, support development of evidence-based interventions, support implementation of progress monitoring tools that are sensitive to small changes, and train other school personnel on effective consultation skills. School psychologists may or may not be the RtI coordinator or facilitator. Decisions about the level of leadership a school psychologist has in the problem-solving process will be dependent on school needs, administrator expectations, and the school psychologist's individual skill set.

*I think in many capacities and many buildings, school psychologists are serving as core members of those teams. And in the building that I am at, I am a core member of the problem-solving team. It's a good, positive way to contribute to this process from the perspective and the skill level that a school psychologist has.*

—School Psychologist Lynette Pfeiffer

### Key expectations of School Psychologist:

- Support buildings in developing problem-solving teams
- Participate as a designated consultant and/or RtI Coordinator
- Progress monitor as appropriate
- Provide interventions as appropriate



*The RTI process is a fluid process and it allows stakeholders, skilled specialists, teachers, parents and administrators to come together and really look at the individual growth that's taking place for students that are a part of the process.*

*—Director of Federal Programs Jim Welte*

## Specialists

(Speech/Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist/Nurse/English Language Learner Teachers/Gifted and Talented Specialists/Title I Teachers/Vision Teachers/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers)

Specialists are an important component to the problem-solving team; however, the level of their participation will vary based on their caseload, level of expertise, time in building, etc. Specialists are expected to participate in the RTI process as outside consultants who help in the development of interventions and the identification of progress monitoring tools. On the other hand, specialists are not expected to provide all of the interventions developed in their area of expertise or progress monitor all students receiving interventions. This level of participation will be dependent on the specialist and the intensity of the intervention. The level of specialist support will need to be determined on a case by case basis and always with the input of the specialist.

### Key expectations of Specialists:

- Consult with problem-solving team on development of interventions and progress monitoring tools for specialized area
- Support interventions at the Tier II & III level as appropriate

The following portion of the guidebook will provide guidance about the flow of the problem-solving process and decision-making steps.

## School Counselors/School Social Workers

School counselors and school social workers will also be important participants in the RtI Model. Their roles will also vary by building, and will be influenced by the skills the individual displays as well as the needs of individual schools. School counselors and social workers can be a valuable resource at the Tier I, II, or III levels to support interventions or to participate on the problem-solving team. School counselors and social workers have considerable skills in consultation and working with parents; therefore, they may be a part of the team as a designated consultant, may be an outside consultant, or may support the team as an interventionist or progress monitor. Decisions about the level of involvement a school counselor or social worker has in the problem-solving process will be dependent on school needs, administrator expectations, and the individual's individual skill set.

### Key expectations of School Counselors/School Social Workers:

- Support the problem-solving process
- Provide consultation to the problem-solving team as appropriate
- Engage families in the process
- Support and empower families to partner in the process



## RtI after Implementation

The following guidelines will assist in implementing the RtI model with fidelity and will enhance consistency across all schools in the district. Although instructional strategies and interventions may look different from tier to tier in schools, the key components of the problem-solving process need to be present and practiced in each building. Furthermore, if a student is identified as having a Specific Learning Disability by one school, it is vital that the same student would be identified by another school.

### Tier I

At the beginning of the year, teachers are responsible for identifying instructional levels of all students. This determination should be an objective understanding from available data sources including CSAP results, district benchmark data, DIBELS, and other CBMs. Data should be collected from a variety of sources. At the elementary level, schools are expected to universally screen all students. With screening data, instructional decisions can lead to flooding or flexible instructional groups. At the secondary level, staffs should utilize CSAP results, district benchmark data, quarterly and unit assessments, etc. to determine which students may be at-risk for failure or may be underachieving. Secondary schools may then decide to use a quick diagnostic instrument or CBM to screen the students with concerns to determine their class schedule which may include a double block in a specific content area. The above elementary and secondary example would be considered standard protocols.

Another important aspect of Tier I is the curriculum. Each district and/or building establishes core curriculum in each content area that is aligned with state standards. Principals are expected to support sound classroom management and instructional strategies through spot observations and instructional leadership. Administrators and teachers need to strive to meet the goal of improving student achievement.

After teachers screen and place students into instructional groups, teachers may have concerns about individual student progress. When a concern is identified, teachers have a responsibility to identify the specific areas of need and provide instructional strategies and interventions to enhance the student's opportunity for success, whether the student is at-risk or underachieving. An expectation of teachers at this point is documenting the concern, the intervention, and the monitored progress. For example, if a 3rd grade teacher has administered DIBELS at the beginning of the year and a student was identified as being Intensive on Oral Reading Fluency, the teacher may have several concerns. Initially, the teacher attempts to determine which component of reading is the root of the problem: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension or vocabulary. If the problem is determined to be fluency, the teacher may implement a strategy in which the student partners with another student every day for 5 minutes to practice

reading passages as the other student times him/her. The student then documents words read per minute on a graph and the teacher and student conference at the end of every week. This is considered an intervention to increase fluency which the teacher could document. If the student continues to struggle, the teacher may do further assessment to determine whether the fluency problem is caused by poor word attack skills and design another intervention. The teacher could also utilize the support of the grade-level team, the monthly data discussions, and other teachers that may have expertise in the problem area. Using a problem-solving process, the team defines the problem and may select another universal intervention or strategy for implementation. Although plans do not need to be formalized, documentation is necessary. Furthermore, teachers are expected to document communications with the student's parents to begin home/school collaboration.

Most importantly progress needs to be monitored to determine if the intervention is successful. If the student makes insufficient progress, the teacher may refer the student to the problem-solving team by utilizing the schools documentation forms. An important aspect of referring a student to the problem-solving team is conducting a Gap Analysis. Initially teachers may need support from the team to calculate the Gap Analysis; however, before proceeding with Tier II, a Gap Analysis is necessary.

- Teachers can begin classroom interventions with any student when concerns arise.
- Teachers are responsible for the implementation of interventions and progress monitoring at this level. Training may be necessary to support development of research-based instructional strategies and interventions.
- Teachers should also be supported by grade-level and school-based teams that discuss and analyze data as well as brainstorm interventions and strategies that are supported by research and best practice.
- Teachers and families should communicate about student progress and the interventions implemented in the classroom.

As soon as a teacher completes the documentation for the problem-solving team, Tier II may begin and parents continue as partners in developing an intervention plan that focuses on the identified need.

### **The problem-solving process at Tier II begins by collecting data that teachers document during Tier I.**

Some students that are discussed by the problem-solving team will have participated in a standard protocol that was described in the prior Tier I section. Although, standard protocols in many situations, especially at the secondary level, may be considered a Tier II intervention, not all students identified as needing a Tier II instructional intervention will need to be monitored by the problem-solving team initially. However, when a student does not respond adequately to the standard protocol, the problem-solving team may be consulted to plan an individualized intervention.

After the classroom teacher completes the documentation forms and provides the necessary information from Tier I to the RTI Coordinator, the coordinator evaluates the information and assigns a case manager/designated consultant/coach based on the area of concern identified. The coordinator then schedules an initial meeting within an appropriate and identified time frame to develop an intervention plan. The coordinator provides the case manager/designated consultant/coach with a file including a consultation form and the documentation forms.

At this point, the case manager/designated consultant/coach schedules a meeting with the referring teacher and consults with the teacher in determining which specific academic or behavior concern will be the focus of the problem-solving team. The case manager/designated consultant/coach also will analyze, to the extent possible, the factors contributing to the problem and will gather any other data that is necessary to ensure that the initial problem-solving meeting is efficient and productive. This may include observations of the student, more progress monitoring data, an interview with the student, etc. The case manager/designated consultant/coach will also inform the teacher of the meeting process and provide information to the teacher to encourage parent involvement. It is the teacher's responsibility to include the parent when gathering information

and invite the parent to the initial problem-solving meeting. The importance of having the teacher communicate with the parent is to signify that this continues to be a classroom plan and not a special education referral.

At the initial problem-solving meeting, the facilitator guides the team, teacher and parents through the problem-solving process. The facilitator or case manager/designated consultant/coach informs the team about the specific academic or behavior concern and what factors are impacting the problem. This part of the meeting should take no longer than 5 minutes. Spending too much time on problem identification and analysis has the danger of limiting the dialogue around the data and intervention plan that will have the most impact on student achievement. At this point the team begins brainstorming research-based interventions and strategies that are evidenced to support the area of concern. The following factors must be considered in every RTI plan: strategy or intervention, interventionist, progress monitoring tool and monitor and follow-up meeting. When discussing a strategy or intervention several essential points must be considered, including the learning environment, what intervention has already been implemented by the teacher and the result of the intervention. In some instances, interventions may be continued but the intensity, size of group or time may need to be adjusted. In other cases, a different intervention that is more focused on a specific skill area is necessary. Furthermore, the team must determine what resources (materials and individuals trained) are available to provide the intervention to the student.





Once the intervention is determined, progress monitoring must be discussed. At the Tier II level, more targeted and time efficient progress monitoring tools need to be considered. Because progress monitoring needs to take place every other week at a minimum (every week for many cases), tools that are sensitive to small changes are necessary. For Tier II, CBM (including DIBELS) are researched to be the most efficient and informative tools available to monitor progress. The tools should be selected based on the skill of concern. Furthermore, progress monitoring needs to be at the instructional level of the student. For example, a 9th grade student with a fluency concern, reading at the 5th grade level, needs to be progress monitored with 5th grade oral reading fluency probes. Another part of the progress monitoring plan is having an individual who is responsible for progress monitoring. This will vary depending on team and building. Many individuals may be utilized to progress monitor including teachers, paraprofessionals, case managers/designated consultants/coaches, parents, other students (especially secondary), etc. The individual responsible for progress monitoring should determine a consistent plan (a specific day every week) for progress monitoring. The progress monitor is also responsible for documenting the student's growth by graphing, monitoring the Gap Analysis and identifying error patterns. The error patterns are vital in determining the instructional needs and developing intervention plans.

Finally, the team needs to determine the next meeting date based on the predicted time for intervention success. The time between the initial and follow-up meeting should not exceed 6 weeks. However, during the time between the initial and follow-up meeting the case manager/designated consultant/coach is responsible for communicating with the teacher, interventionist and progress monitor to determine effectiveness of the intervention. At no time should the intervention stop without a replacement intervention. Because the team meets on a weekly or bi-monthly basis, case managers/designated consultants/coaches may want to provide brief updates periodically to the team. Furthermore, if the student demonstrates insufficient progress, the case manager/designated consultant/coach may collaborate with the student's teacher and/or interventionist to make modifications to the intervention. Also, they may need to schedule a follow-up meeting sooner to select a different intervention. It is the responsibility of the teacher to communicate any concerns with the intervention plan with the case manager/designated consultant/coach between initial and follow-up meetings.

If the student's progress is sufficient, the student may return to Tier I level with universal supports. If the targeted level of interventions is not sufficient, the problem-solving team may elect to move to Tier III.

- Teachers complete documentation for problem-solving team.
- Designated consultants/case managers/coaches consult with classroom teachers to help define and analyze the concern.
- Problem-solving teams meet to develop an intervention plan.
- Problem-solving meetings are efficient and focused on the specific, measurable outcome.
- Interventionists implement the intervention.
- Progress monitoring happens more frequently (at least every other week) to determine whether the intervention is working.
- Consultation continues after the problem-solving meeting between the teacher and the designated consultant/case manager/coach.
- Teachers and families communicate about student progress and the interventions implemented in the classroom.

*With an evaluation of your system you can identify how you replace current practices with better practices.*

*—CDE RtI Consultant Montina Romero*

## Tier III

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If a student moves to Tier III, the problem-solving process looks identical to Tier II although the intervention and progress monitoring increase in frequency and/or intensity. It should be noted that the consultation that encompasses the entire problem-solving process is most important. Teacher and case manager/designated consultant/coach should be communicating on a weekly basis, parents should be engaged and informed throughout the process, and progress monitoring should be the guiding force in making intensity-level changes. A Gap Analysis should be the ultimate determining factor in deciding whether sufficient progress is being made. Also, during Tier III diagnostic assessments may become more important. For example, if determining whether there is a processing concern in reading, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing may be administered to determine if the concern is in the area of memory, fluency, etc. Diagnostic information from observations may also be necessary. For example, if a student continues to have disruptive behavior, such as getting out of his/her seat during whole group instruction, a Functional Behavior Assessment may need to be conducted to determine any antecedents or consequences that are impacting the behavior.

When teams are discussing prescriptive interventions at Tier III, they need to consider a reasonable target for the student within a specified period of time to implement the intense services. If the student is successful with the intervention and demonstrates sufficient progress the team may consider whether the student is able to move to Tier I or Tier II. If the student does not make sufficient progress and the needs are documented to be ongoing Tier III level supports, the student may need to be considered by the team for a referral for special education evaluation. At this point an evaluation team would be organized to address the development of a full and individual evaluation plan.

- This is the most intensive phase of the RtI Model.
- As with Tier II, it is imperative that we can prove through data-based decisions whether the interventions were implemented with fidelity.



## Special Considerations in RtI

### Gifted and Talented

A tiered model of programming is a historical framework for the field of gifted and talented education. Levels of intensity in programming allow for the diversity of individual needs of students who are gifted and talented. Training on differentiation of curriculum, instruction and assessment is essential for meeting the needs of students who are gifted and talented. Response to Intervention provides support systems for students with exceptional ability or potential. Students who are gifted require special provisions because of their strengths and above-grade instructional level or potential. In gifted education, strength-based interventions or strength-based programming, are used to describe tiered instruction.

RtI supports setting targets or trend lines for students. Long-term planning and monitoring of student progress will allow students to learn and grow toward accelerated expectations. The pace of acceleration is based upon individual experiences and needs; and, may include different forms of acceleration over time as described in CDE's Programming Guidelines. RtI also embeds gifted education into the daily focus of quality instruction. Academic, affective and behavioral outcomes become critical targets for students, not solely enrichment targets as was a previous standard. The problem-solving process which uses data, strengths and interests of students to implement appropriate, rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction are strengths of RtI. Progress monitoring continually contributes new data so that learning is dynamic and adjustments are made for pace, depth and complexity of the evidence-based practices utilized.

*I think sometimes teachers struggle with kids that are advanced. RTI allows you to support kids that are on the lower end, to make sure that kids are progressing right that are in the middle, but also to focus on kids that are on the upper end. I think the parents in this state should expect that from us. It's nice that now through the RtI process we're in a position to deliver that. That's really good for education in Colorado.* —Commissioner Dwight Jones

### Students with Individualized Education Plans

Because RtI encompasses all students, students with IEPs are serviced within the three-tiers. There is not another tier or place for students if they are identified as special education. However, because RtI is utilized for the identification of a Specific Learning Disability, understanding how the model fits with eligibility of special education is important.

The Colorado Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Education Act include revised criteria for the identification of students with SLD.

### *Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD):*

Students who have not responded to Tier II and Tier III interventions in the areas of reading, written language, or math, may be eligible for special education as a student with a Specific Learning Disability. In the past, eligibility required that students exhibit a discrepancy between their Full Scale IQ score and their standard scores on a test such as the Woodcock-Johnson-III. When using an RtI model, the administration of an IQ test or individual achievement test is no longer necessary or encouraged. Rather, data gathered during Tier II and Tier III will indicate the student's areas of deficit and insufficient progress when utilizing research-based interventions. Before proceeding with special education eligibility, parents need to sign permission for a comprehensive evaluation. With permission, an eligibility group (which may include members from the problem-solving team) will determine what data, if any, is needed to complete the evaluation. In most cases, reporting on the CBMs, performance on CSAP, as well as any diagnostic testing completed during the problem-solving process will comprise most of the data needed for determination. However, observations of the child in his/her learning environment will also need to be included. Any additional standardized assessments that are administered should have utility for designing intensive interventions for the student or to rule out other factors such as possible Significant Limited Intellectual Capacity or Significant Identified Emotional Disability.



### *Eligibility for Significantly Limited Intellectual Capacity (SLIC):*

To properly determine whether a student has significant cognitive concerns that are impacting his/her ability to be successful within Tiers I or II, it will still be necessary to complete a standard battery assessment (i.e., IQ, Adaptive, Achievement) and meet the eligibility criteria as identified by CDE guidelines.

### *Eligibility for Significant Identifiable Emotional Disability (SIED):*

Students that have significant behavior concerns should initially be referred to the problem-solving team. However, if the student makes insufficient progress and is referred for a special education evaluation, the IEP team should continue to follow the CDE recommended SIED checklist and guidelines. The assessment process will involve a meeting with the eligibility group to review the eligibility checklist utilizing data that had been collected during Tiers II and III. It is essential that standardized behavior checklists (e.g., BASC-II or CBCL) from the perspective of the school and community continue to be utilized in making the final decision regarding eligibility. However, it should be noted that such instruments may be used during Tier II or Tier III, to determine areas of deficits and appropriate intervention focus. In such cases, the data from these prior tests may be reviewed rather than re-administered if they have been completed in the recent past.

### *Eligibility for ADHD via a Physical Disability (PD):*

Students that have a private diagnosis of ADHD are not automatically eligible for special education, unless they have been made eligible by another district. Such students should be referred to the problem-solving team if they are unsuccessful with the supports offered at Tier I. Eligibility for special education will continue to require a proper assessment of behavior checklists (school and community), review of academic records, and consultation with the family physician to determine whether the ADHD is the cause of the student's deficits. Similar to SIED assessment, if the necessary assessments have been administered during Tier II or Tier III, new instruments may not be necessary.

### *Students with Severe and Low Incidence Disabilities:*

Students with previously identified severe medical, physical, or cognitive disabilities (including those with Autism, Down syndrome, Visual or Hearing Disabilities, Deafness and/or Blindness) may be referred directly for special education evaluation upon the school becoming aware of their level of need, whether the knowledge is the result of a private evaluation, student find screening or transfer.

### *Eligibility for Speech Language Impairment (SLI):*

Students with significant articulation difficulties that cannot be corrected through a short-term intervention with the speech therapist or via consultation from the speech therapist with the parent or classroom teacher, can move to special education evaluation without additional delay. To make this decision, it is necessary for the speech language therapist to have observed the student and to have concurred with this decision.

Students without articulation concerns, but who exhibit some language deficits, should be referred to Tier II interventions before consideration of special education eligibility.

## Title I

Title I schools may operate one of two different types of programs—Title I Schoolwide or Title I Targeted Assistance. Both programs can support the implementation of RtI, but in different ways. Because a schoolwide program embraces a whole school approach, the Title I plan should be woven into activities at all three of the tiers. Whereas a targeted assistance program is focused on the most at-risk students, its activities should be focused solely on tiers II and III. More detailed descriptions of how an RtI approach should look in each of these programs are described in the next sections.

### RtI in Title I Schoolwide Programs

In a Title I schoolwide program, resources, services, and personnel are leveraged to support a cohesive program that upgrades the educational opportunities for all students in the school. Therefore, if the school adopts an RtI approach, Title I should be an integral part of the process. Progress monitoring, data dialogues, targeted and intensive interventions that support RtI are allowable as long as they are addressed in the Title I schoolwide plan and are justified through the school's needs assessment.

### RtI in Title I Targeted Assistance Programs

In a targeted assistance program, additional services are only provided to those students identified as having the greatest need for assistance. The Title I teacher provides supplemental instruction to these identified students.

While an RtI approach can align with the intent of a targeted assistance program, there are limitations:

- Eligible Title I students must be provided supplemental instruction from the Title I teacher. The ability to have another, highly qualified teacher (other than the Title I teacher) provide the supplemental instruction to Title I eligible students is restricted.
- Parents of eligible Title I students must be notified of the availability of Title I services and have the right to decline these services.

Staff in a targeted assistance program are encouraged to collaborate whenever possible in the RtI process. However, compliance with certain regulations is required for the purposes of meeting targeted assistance requirements:

- Title I teachers must target identified Title I students whose parents have given permission to participate in the program.
- Title I students must receive primary instruction from the classroom teacher as well as additional/supplemental instruction from Title I teachers.
- Title I services cannot replace classroom instruction, but must instead add more instructional time.
- Title I teachers can only teach whole classrooms or non-Title I students on an incidental or demonstration basis.



*We partner with the Title schools and monitor the efforts that are in place through the RtI process. We have conversations around data and outcomes and around interventions that will be more effective in order to address the needs of students that are performing at all levels.*

*—Director of Federal Programs Jim Welte*

## Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a schoolwide approach to establish and maintain effective school environments that support academic achievement and promote positive behavioral outcomes while preventing problem behavior that interferes with learning. A continuum of proactive, evidence-based behavioral supports are implemented by a building team at the universal level for all students through defining and teaching positive expectations in all school settings by the staff. Modeling and reinforcing appropriate social behavior increases the occurrence of positive behaviors and provides multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate success. PBS utilizes a problem-solving model that is consistent with the principals of RtI. Comparable to RtI, PBS establishes a system of interventions that are accessible to students based on individual needs. RtI and PBS are based on utilizing differentiated instruction and each framework employs components to be in place at Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III. PBS supports students at the universal, targeted and intensive levels using evidence-based interventions and analysis of behavioral data. Students have increased access to instruction which promotes academic achievement and a safe and positive learning environment. RtI and PBS establish the expectation of high-quality academic and behavior instruction and interventions at the schoolwide and classroom levels before a problem-solving team can



determine whether a student needs additional services. Furthermore, parents are actively engaged in teaching and acknowledging identified positive academic and social/emotional behaviors at home for students who require more intensive supports. RtI and PBS allow schools to concentrate on academic and behavior needs with varying levels of intensity and support by providing interventions at different tiers. Problem-solving teams support classroom teachers when a student is not making adequate progress.



*I think what has really changed is that the focus is on early intervention; that we are not looking to give the child a label or we're not looking to remove a child before we start working with the child. We're actually saying that early intervention can make a difference. Maybe that child never has to have a label.*  
—Commissioner Dwight Jones

## Preschool

Because of the many variables that affect preschool in Colorado, the implementation of RtI for this age group has special considerations. Because preschool attendance is not mandated and services are delivered by several providers including public schools, federally funded Head Start, community-based, for-profit, not-for-profit, religiously oriented organizations, leaders must design an approach that represents the interests of the preschool population served with special attention to collaboratively working with all service providers. Allocating resources effectively for services to preschool learners is instrumental in the design of a deliverable RtI plan.

A collaborative model for working with service providers outside the school system is the main consideration in creating a climate conducive to a successful preschool RtI program. Staff training and consistency are paramount in addressing a viable problem-solving process for preschool learners and initial staff certification/qualification influences the fidelity of execution in a problem-solving process.

In preschool, high-quality research-based curriculum has been less available historically for preschoolers. Delivery of instruction varies widely, depending on the educational level and professional development opportunities focused on methodology for the staff. Furthermore, reliable, readily available, academic, preschool instruments of assessment for data gathering are relatively few. However, the unparalleled value of early recognition and intervention will help guide the role of, and necessary measures for, screening and progress monitoring.

Because of the unique nature of all preschool learners, parents/guardians are the most knowledgeable adults in their lives; therefore, parent input is critical for student accomplishment.

*Response to Intervention has that promise and that potential of providing reading intervention services to students at that first sign of reading difficulty. And many school districts across Colorado that have been implementing RtI for several years are beginning to see very promising and very exciting data about achievement gains, particularly in reading and behavior.*

—Assistant Commissioner Ed Steinberg



## English Language Learners

A three-tiered, early intervention model is essential to support the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs need to be provided universal supports that enhance language acquisition in conjunction with content instruction. Many students who are identified as ELLs are provided with ELL services; however, for students who do not demonstrate progress, an individual problem-solving process should be utilized. RtI directly supports students who have English language acquisition needs by providing a structured problem-solving process that employs the skills and expertise of professionals throughout the system.

There are several considerations when gathering data for ELL students. Identifying the level of understanding that the ELL student has in relation to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is important across universal, targeted and intensive interventions. Also, data collected through the problem-solving process must be compared to other ELL students with a similar background, age and amount of exposure to English acquisition. Furthermore, language acquisition must be considered a part of progress monitoring. In many instances, a cultural liaison will be important to support parents and families throughout the problem-solving process.

# Glossary of Terms

## **Behavior Intervention Plan**

A behavior plan based on a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). It is developed and implemented by a collaborative team, which includes the student and parent. The plan includes positive behavior supports (PBS), identified skills for school success, and specific strategies for behavioral instruction.

## **Data-Driven Decision-Making**

The process of planning for student success (both academic and behavioral) through the use of ongoing progress monitoring and analysis of its data.

## **Duration**

For the purposes of documenting response to intervention, duration refers to the length (number of minutes) of a session multiplied by the number of sessions per school year. “Sufficient duration” is dependent on a number of factors including the program or strategy being used, the age of the student, and the severity of the deficit involved. Some programs offer guidelines or recommendations for duration. Reading Recovery, for example, limits the number of 20–30 minute sessions in which a child can participate to 100, believing that a child who does not make adequate gains after this amount of time would likely benefit from an alternative intervention.

## **Evidence-based Instruction/Interventions**

See research-based instruction/intervention/practice.

## **Fidelity**

Fidelity refers to the accuracy, loyalty and attentiveness with which an intended research design for instruction and/or intervention is implemented. To ensure standardization, intervention specialists must generally follow a prescribed protocol in order to attend to a program’s or strategy’s fidelity.

## **Flexible Grouping**

Prescriptive, focused, research-based interventions provided to students by any trained or skilled staff member, regardless of the child’s special or general education categorization or the educator’s special or general education job description.

## **Focused Assessment**

Formal and informal assessment targeted to specifically plan program service delivery and/or appropriate interventions for student success.

## **Frequency**

How often a behavior or an intervention occurs. Commonly used in Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA) and Response to Intervention (RTI) research in the context of the three most important factors in considering behaviors of concern: Frequency, Intensity, and Duration. Frequency of an intervention, as an element of its effectiveness, can be a focus of the fidelity of delivery.

## **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)**

This term comes from what is called a “Functional Assessment” or “Functional Analysis” in the field of applied behavioral analysis. This is the process of determining the cause (or “function”) of behavior before developing an intervention or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The intervention/BIP is based on the hypothesized cause (function) of behavior. Adapted from Stephen Starin, Ph.D., <http://www.aspennj.org/function.html>.

## **Gap Analysis**

Gap Analysis is a tool for measuring the difference between the student’s current level of performance and benchmark expectations.

## **Intensity**

The adjustment of duration, length and teacher-to-student ratio for a child’s academic or behavioral needs.

## **Intervention**

The systematic and explicit instruction provided to accelerate growth in an area of identified need. Interventions are provided by both special and general educators, and are based on training, not titles. They are designed to improve performance relative to a specific, measurable goal. Interventions are based on valid information about current performance, realistic implementation, and include ongoing student progress monitoring.

**Multi-tiered Model**

Providing differing levels of intensity [i.e. universal (Tier I), targeted (Tier II), intensive (Tier III)] based upon student responsiveness to intervention, with ongoing progress monitoring and focused assessment.

**Prescriptive Intervention**

A specified response, that focuses on academic or behavioral areas of concern, to meet the specific needs of a student.

**Problem-Solving Process**

The problem-solving process is an interdisciplinary, collaborative team process which is based on a multi-tiered model and includes data-driven decision making, parent/school partnerships, progress monitoring, focused assessment, flexible service delivery and prescriptive, research-based interventions.

**Problem-Solving Team**

A collaborative team (which includes parents, general and special educators) that meets to evaluate student data and to plan and monitor prescribed interventions.

**Progress Monitoring**

Progress Monitoring is the ongoing process that involves collecting and analyzing data to determine student progress toward specific skills or general outcomes. Progress monitoring generates the useful data for making instructional decisions based on the review and analysis of student data. Monitoring student progress, through collection and analysis of data, is an effective way to determine if the instruction being delivered is meeting the needs of the student.

**Research-based Instruction/Intervention/Practice**

A research-based instructional practice or intervention is one found to be reliable, trustworthy, and valid based on evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in achievement. Ongoing documentation and analysis of student outcomes helps to define effective practice. In the absence of evidence, the instruction/ intervention must be considered “best practice” based on available research and professional literature.

**Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)**

A schoolwide, multi-tiered framework designed to develop positive learning behavior in all students. The focus of PBS is on prevention rather than the development of consequences for inappropriate behavior.

**Screening**

Refers to a quick checklist, survey or probe about a student’s development or skills to see if further evaluation is needed.

**Specific, Measurable Outcome**

The statement of a single, specific desired result from an intervention. To be measurable, the outcome should be expressed in observable and quantifiable terms (i.e. Johnny will demonstrate mastery of grade-level basic math calculation skills as measured by a score of 85% or better on the end-of the unit test on numerical operations).

**Tier One (Universal) Intervention**

Tier I Interventions are those provided to all students in the classroom, regardless of individual needs (e.g. Bully proofing, Guided Reading, Every Day Math, 6-Traits Writing). These may be research-based, but are not necessarily prescriptive.

**Tier Two (Targeted) Intervention**

Tier II Interventions are to be implemented when assessment indicates that a student is not making adequate gains from universal instruction alone. They are generally smaller group interventions designed to meet the specific needs of a student and his/her peers with similar needs (e.g. Social skills training, Multi-sensory reading, or Knowing Mathematics).

**Tier Three (Intensive) Intervention**

Tier III Interventions are those which offer a student highly individualized, systematic and explicit instruction in an area of assessed need. Although the programs or strategies may be similar to those offered at Tier II, the intervention is reclassified as “intensive” if it is individualized to meet the needs of a particular student and the duration and/or intensity of the intervention is increased to accelerate student response.

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## Resources

Aims Web website: [www.aimsweb.com](http://www.aimsweb.com)

Alpine Achievement: [www.alpineachievement.com](http://www.alpineachievement.com)

Discipline Help: You Can Handle Them All: <http://www.disciplinehelp.com/>

Do What's Right: <http://dww.ed.gov>

Intervention Central website: [www.interventioncentral.org](http://www.interventioncentral.org)

Florida Center for Reading Research: [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)

Oregon Reading First: <http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/>

Pikes Peak Literacy Strategies Project: [www.pplsp.org](http://www.pplsp.org)

What Works Clearinghouse website: [www.w-w-c.org](http://www.w-w-c.org)

Recognition and Response: <http://www.recognitionandresponse.org/>

Please access the Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) to download sample forms that can be utilized throughout RtI.



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