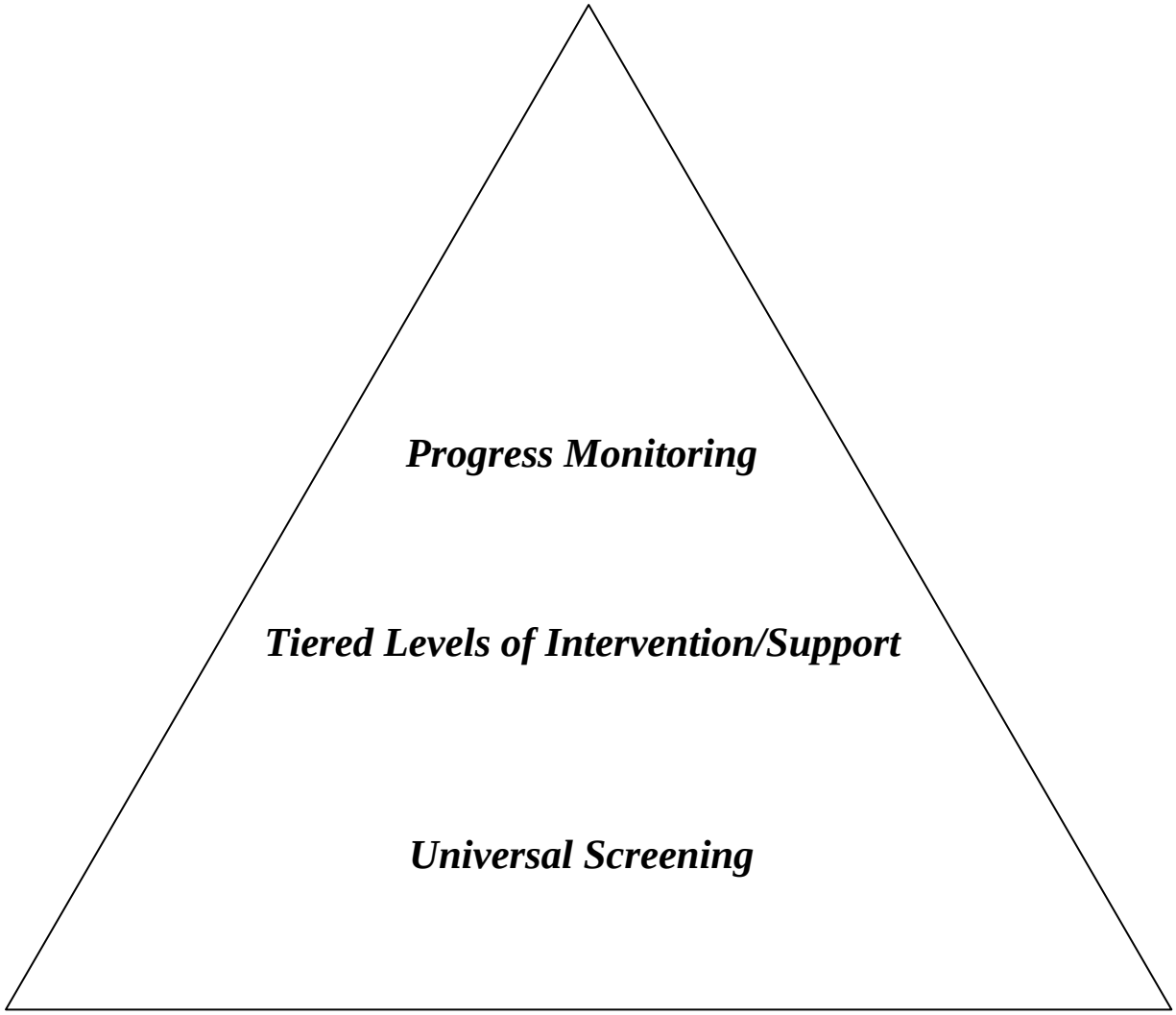
Responsive Instruction: Refining Our Work of Teaching All Children

Virginia's "Response to Intervention" Initiative



A Guide for School Divisions

Virginia Department of Education
Office of Student Services
Division of Special Education and Student Services

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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

BILLY K. CANNADAY, JR., ED.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Office: (804) 225-2023
Fax: (804) 371-2099

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Dear Colleagues:

On December 3, 2004, the President of the United States signed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act*. This reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) continued the ongoing legislative efforts to tighten and solidify the relationship between general and special education for the successful teaching of all children. My professional organization, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), has been a major party to these exciting and far-reaching efforts. Under the increasingly popular phrase "response-to-intervention," educational theory, educational research, and best practices in education are coming together in a way that will be guiding our work as educators for the foreseeable future.

IDEA'04 removes the mandate that the "significant discrepancy" formula based on IQ tests must be used for learning disabilities (LD) identification. Instead, it requires that states allow school divisions to consider alternative models for LD identification, which include the "Response to Intervention (RtI)" model. The RtI model is a valid process for identifying struggling students and also a way to merge special education into the overall provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB),* such as ensuring clear standards, useful measurements, and reliable instructional practices. This model is based on research conducted by some of our country's leading educators.

In its simplest form, Response to Intervention is a process of universal screening for identification of student need, systematic tiered support and intervention for identified needs, and ongoing student progress monitoring to determine effectiveness of intervention. Many of us who have been studying the response to intervention literature and working on this guidance document have concluded that these three elements – universal screening, student progress monitoring, tiered intervention – are the basic elements of good instruction; others of us have suggested that they might best be thought of as responsive instruction. Regardless, these practices incorporate clear standards, useful measures, and reliable general instruction practices affecting both instruction and behavior management.

As you read through the following pages, you will be able to see how Virginia's Standards of Quality (SOQ), Standards of Accreditation (SOA), and Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) have anticipated much in the IDEA legislation, and position us for responding to its expectations. In a state where every student in grades K through 3 is *already universally screened* for early signs of reading difficulties (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, PALS), it should not present a challenge to introduce *tighter student monitoring practices* where necessary. In a state where numerous school superintendents and school principals have exercised creative and innovative leadership in developing remarkable *instructional interventions* (Title I, *Reading First*, and *Algebra Readiness* to name a few), it should not present a challenge to organize these into a more *systematic* manner (tiers) that allows for more consistent application and easier measurement of effectiveness. You will note the Department of Education is committed to the ongoing development of the behavioral component of RtI as well. It has already published two documents dealing with behavioral difficulties experienced by students – *An Introduction to Effective School-wide Discipline in Virginia: A Statewide Initiative to Support Positive Academic Behavioral Outcomes for All Students* and *Functional Behavioral Assessment, Behavioral Intervention Plans, and Positive Intervention and Supports: An Essential Part of School-wide Discipline*.

This guidance document outlines the principles and practices for implementing an effective RtI process in schools. Its purpose is to assist school divisions in taking action to provide seamless instructional and behavioral strategies that maximize educational opportunity for all students. The information provided in this guidance document will be expanded and supplemented through professional staff development and companion guidance documents in the months to come.

In implementing RtI, I would encourage school divisions to form a divisionwide RtI implementation team. The team should study the philosophy and practices of RtI as outlined in this document in preparation for orientation and training on these materials in the fall. The divisionwide team should become the vehicle for helping individual school-level teams to implement RtI practices.

Thank you for your service to the children of the Commonwealth. I urge you to continue to be responsive to the needs of all children entrusted to your care as you move forward to ensure that each child in Virginia receives a quality education responsive to his or her needs. It is a pleasure to work with dedicated educators in this exciting journey in education.

Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Patricia Abrams	Office of Special Education Instructional Services, Director
Mark Allan	Office of Elementary Instruction, Director
Wayne Barry	Office of Student Services, Specialist
Shelly Bazemore	Office of School Improvement, Specialist
Cynthia Cave	Office of Student Services, Director
Gabie Frazier	Office of Program Administration and Accountability, Title I Specialist
Diane Gillam	Office of Special Education Instructional Services, Specialist
Ginna Glover	Office of Elementary Instruction, Reading Specialist
Mary Holm	Office of School Improvement, Coordinator
Marie Ireland	Office of Special Education Instructional Services, Specialist
Tom Manthey	State Improvement Grant, Coordinator
Ann Sheehan	Office of Program Administration and Accountability, Title I Specialist
Susan Trulove	Office of Student Services, Specialist
Karen Trump	Office of State Schools, Director
Deborah Wickham	Office of Elementary Instructional Services, Mathematics Specialist
Lois Williams	Office of Middle/High School Instruction, Mathematics Specialist

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Joan Anderson	Norfolk City Public Schools, Senior Director of Special Education Services
Andy Anderson	Licensed Professional Counselor, Private Practice
Kathy Aux	Prince William County Public Schools, Supervisor of School Psychologists
Diane Bailer	Fairfax County Public Schools, Director of Psychology and Preventive Services
Diane Blanton	Hanover County Public Schools, Special Education Teacher
Colette Blount	Charlottesville City Public Schools, Gifted Teacher
Bryan Cooley	Frederick County Public Schools, Instructional Support Specialist
Douglas Cox	Virginia Department of Education, Assistant Superintendent Division of Special Education and Student Services
Barbara Flanagan	Roanoke City Public Schools, Special Education Supervisor
David Gangle	Amelia County Public Schools, Superintendent
Ellen Hammer	Parent
Marcia Invernizzi	University of Virginia, Professor of Education, PALS Director
Loretta Jones	Lynchburg College, Associate Professor, Counselor Education
John Lloyd	University of Virginia, Professor of Education
Jean Lokerson	Virginia Commonwealth University, Emeritus Professor of Education
David Martin	Fauquier County Public Schools, Superintendent
Laurie McCullough	Waynesboro City Public Schools, Director of Instruction
Jack Naglieri	George Mason University, Professor of Psychology
Ronald Reeve	University of Virginia, Professor; Chairman, Department of Human Services
Sunita Sharma	Virginia Union University, Associate Professor of Education, Department Chair
Tom Shortt	Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, Executive Director
Peter Squire	State Special Education Advisory Committee, Member
Donnie Stickney	T/TAC – The College of William and Mary, Specialist
Bambi Thompson	Gloucester County Public Schools, Principal
Stanley Trent	University of Virginia, Assistant Professor of Education
Anne Watlington	Parent
Lynn Weaver	Frederick County Public Schools, School Psychologist
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Introduction

Federal law enacted in 2005 required that state departments of education expand the methods available for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. The following pages offer carefully reasoned insights and practices from the body of research surrounding the response to intervention process included in the federal legislation. This Response to Intervention (RtI) guidance document is designed to assist school divisions in understanding what RtI is, its origins in educational practice and research, its usefulness and value, and several ways it can be implemented. It acknowledges the groundwork laid by the Early Intervention Reading Initiative in Virginia, and other instructional programs, and provides information that will assist school divisions in building on that foundation. It is especially designed to assist school divisions in establishing effective student progress monitoring teams in all of their schools.

RtI is the practice of using data to guide high-quality instruction and behavioral interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to make critical educational decisions. This process should be used for making decisions regarding general, supplemental, and special education, and for formulating a closely coupled system of instruction and intervention directed by child outcome data. The primary purposes of RtI are the identification and prevention of potential learning problems as well as providing additional support for targeted individual needs. Its core principles are:

Effectively teach all children.
Intervene early.
Use a multi-tiered model of service delivery.

Use a problem solving or standard protocol method to make decisions within the multi-tiered model.

Use research-based scientifically validated instruction and interventions.

Monitor student progress to inform instruction, and

Use assessment for three different purposes: screening, diagnostics and progress monitoring.

(National Association of State Directors of Special Education [NASDSE] 2006)

Chapter One: Federal and State Law and Instructional Practices

The Basis for RtI in Federal Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA 2004/P.L. 108-466) was signed into law in December 2004. IDEIA 2004 (hereafter referred to as IDEA) provides an alternative way of finding a child eligible for special education services as a student with a learning disability. According to statutes…

> *…when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability… a local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability… a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to a scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures….*
>
> *(20 U.S.C. §1414(b) (A) and (B))*

The Act does not eliminate the use of the discrepancy model for identifying students with specific learning disabilities, but gives school divisions additional methods for determining whether a child has a learning disability. The Response to Intervention (RtI) process is one alternative to the discrepancy formula.

RtI provides a framework for effectively utilizing best instructional practices within a scientifically, research-based curriculum to address students' needs. The law ensures that children are first provided good instruction and good instructional intervention when needed…

> *…to ensure that underachievement in a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math, the group must consider…data that demonstrate that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings, delivered by qualified personnel; and data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals…*
>
> *(34 C.F.R. §300.309(b))*

Working in tandem with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), IDEA requires general education teachers and staff to monitor and measure a student's response to individual instruction and intervention in the general education classroom. Only after several of these systematic and research-grounded interventions have been implemented and evaluated, and a child has consistently failed to make adequate progress, may s/he be considered for special education evaluation.

Instructional Standards in Virginia

Virginia has a rich history of establishing instructional benchmarks and developing programs to assist educators in meeting student instructional needs. Initiatives such as *The Early Intervention Reading Initiative, Algebra Readiness,* and *Instructional Support Teams (IST)* are examples of the state's efforts at instructional intervention. Using a myriad of approaches and acronyms, school divisions have also developed initiatives to provide for more robust instructional programming in their schools as well.

The Board of Education's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accreditation in Virginia (Standards of Accreditation),* the *Standards of Quality* found in the Code of Virginia, and the *Early Intervention Reading Initiative* established by Virginia's Acts of Assembly (1997) reflect Virginia's instructional goals and ideals and provide a firm basis for RtI practices.

From the *Standards of Accreditation*:

Each student should learn the relevant grade level/course subject matter before promotion to the next grade. (8 VAC 20-131-30)

Each school should have a process, as appropriate, to identify and recommend strategies to address the learning behavior, communication, or development of individual children who are having difficulty in the educational setting.
(8 VAC 20-131-30)

Schools shall maintain, in a manner prescribed by the Board of Education, an early skills and knowledge achievement record in reading and mathematics for each student in grades kindergarten through 3 to monitor student progress and to promote successful achievement on the third grade SOL tests.
(8 VAC 20-131-80(B))

Staff shall assess the progress of students and report promptly and constructively to them and their parents. (8 VAC 20-131-220)

At the beginning of each school year, each school shall provide to its students' parents or guardians information on the availability of and source for receiving the learning objectives to be achieved at their child's grade level and a copy of the school division promotion, retention, and remediation policies.
(8 VAC 20-131-270(C)(1))

From the *Standards of Quality:*

Students shall be expected to achieve the educational objectives established by the school division at appropriate age or grade levels. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(B))

Local school boards shall also develop and implement programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who are educationally at risk including, but not limited to, those who fail to achieve a passing score on any Standards of Learning assessment in grades three through eight….
(Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(C)

Any student who fails all four of the Standards of Learning assessments for the relevant grade level in grades three through eight shall be required to attend a summer school program or to participate in another form of remediation.
(Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(C))

Remediation programs shall include, when applicable, a procedure for early identification of students who are at risk of failing the Standards of Learning assessments in grades three through eight…. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(C))

…Forms of remediation shall be chosen by the division superintendent to be appropriate to the academic needs of the student. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(C))
Additionally, local school boards shall also implement the following:

A plan to make achievement for students who are educationally at risk a division-wide priority that shall include procedures for measuring the progress of such students. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(D)(8))

Early identification, diagnosis, and assistance for students with reading problems and provision of instructional strategies and reading practices that benefit the development of reading skills for all students. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(D)(11))

The collection and analysis of data and the use of the results to evaluate and make decisions about the instructional program. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:1(D)(14)

To assess the educational progress of students, the Board of Education shall (i) develop appropriate assessments, which may include criterion-referenced tests and alternative assessment instruments that may be used by classroom teachers…. (Sec. 22.1-253.13:(C))

Each local school board shall adopt a division-wide comprehensive, unified, long-range plan based on data collection, an analysis of the data, and how the data will be utilized to improve classroom instruction and student achievement. (Sec. 22.2-253.13:6(B))

From the *Early Intervention Reading Initiative:*

…from the general fund shall be disbursed by the Department of Education to local school divisions for the purpose of providing early intervention services to primary grade students who demonstrate deficiencies based on their individual performance on kindergarten or first-grade diagnostic tests which have been approved by the Department of Education. (Ch.924-140, 1997 Acts of Assembly; 2001ADD)

Participating divisions are required to use the state-provided diagnostic screening instrument, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), or a diagnostic screening instrument approved by the Department of Education. (SUPTS. MEMO NO. 92, 04.27.2007)

RtI bridges general education and special education by extending some specialized evaluation practices into general education, thereby building on existing standards and initiatives. Problems associated with the current system of special education identification, along with the development and availability of new and improved scientific research-based interventions for children's learning problems, have

provided the impetus for such reform (Walser, 2007). Some of the more prevalent of these problems experienced over the years include:

- The deliberate separation of special education from general education
- Lack of documentation of benefits of remedial, compensatory and special education programs for students with high-incidence disabilities
- Eligibility determination procedures that have weak relationships to instructional interventions
- Lack of focus on prevention and early identification of problems when they are less complex and easier to resolve
- Overrepresentation of some minority students in special education programs
- Failure to effectively treat the fundamental causes of learning problems and/or align instruction to recognized learning styles and cognitive processes.

In summary, the Commonwealth of Virginia has a firm foundation in general education policy and practice that supports the development and implementation of RtI.

Chapter Two: Defining RtI

Response to Intervention (RtI) is primarily an instructional framework and philosophy, the goals and objectives of which include early intervention for students who struggle to attain or maintain grade level performance. It is an ongoing process of using student performance and other data to guide instructional and intervention decisions. Since there is great variability in individual response rates to instruction among children, carefully selecting and implementing scientifically-based instructional interventions increases the likelihood that a student will be the most successful at grade level. With this in mind, school divisions and individual schools need to closely scrutinize and evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional and behavioral management programs. RtI activities are designed to support these ongoing efforts.

Definition

RtI derives its name from the very practice of offering interventions provided by the general education teacher, such as additional instruction or small group instruction, and then systematically evaluating the child's response. Interventions can also be delivered as supplemental instruction provided by other trained interventionists within the school. Many teachers and schools are already engaged in these kinds of activities, especially in grades K-3 in schools participating in Virginia's *Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI).* The wisdom of both EIRI and RtI is that at the earliest signs of a child's failure to show adequate progress with peer-appropriate instruction, adjustments in

instruction are made to fit the child's needs. An essential activity in these efforts is close monitoring of the child's progress and the intervention's effectiveness.

In addition to academic deficit, interfering behavior is often a factor that must be considered when trying to determine why a student is not performing at a satisfactory level (or rate of learning). Because academics and behavior are closely connected, they need to be addressed simultaneously. Students who exhibit interfering behaviors should be screened and monitored just as those who are experiencing academic difficulties.

Essential Components

Successful implementation of RtI involves three important components: universal screening; multiple layers or "tiers" of instruction, intervention, and support, and progress monitoring (an integrated data collection and assessment system to inform decision making). Implementation of these core components of RtI can build on and extend existing practices and procedures through grades and across content areas. For example, in Virginia, the universal screening of reading development through PALS provides a wonderful foundation for building a tiered system of interventions.

Each of the core components is described briefly below, and an additional chapter explains all three in greater detail.

Universal Screening

Because Response to Intervention activities are designed to intervene for struggling students at the earliest signs of need, an important step in identifying at-risk students is the use of universal screening of students in core academic areas. Screening is

used to identify each student's level of proficiency at a single point in time. Such screening aids in identifying students who may be in need of closer monitoring in the general education curriculum or in need of more intensive intervention (academic and/or behavioral).

Universal screening involves brief assessments of student performance using either standardized or curriculum-based measures (CBMs). When a significant number of students are meeting proficiency levels based on the results of universal screening tools, it is an indication that the instruction in the core area is effective. As part of implementing RtI, universal screening is conducted at least three times during the school year: fall, winter, and spring, in the general education classroom. In Virginia, all kindergarten students are universally screened using PALS to determine their level of prerequisite reading skills. PALS may be administered three times a year in grades K-3. RtI seeks to extend universal screening to higher grades and to other academic areas.

A Multi-Tiered Instruction and Intervention Model

RtI is a multi-tiered service-delivery model. The tiers generally represent universal instruction with multiple grouping formats (Tier 1); supplemental instruction, (i.e., targeted instruction/intervention in homogeneous small groups of three to five students (Tier 2); and intensive/individualized instruction/intervention in homogeneous small groups of one to three students (Tier 3). Students with special education needs are generally found at the highest levels of tier involvement, but not all children at the highest level of tier involvement are necessarily identified as special education students.

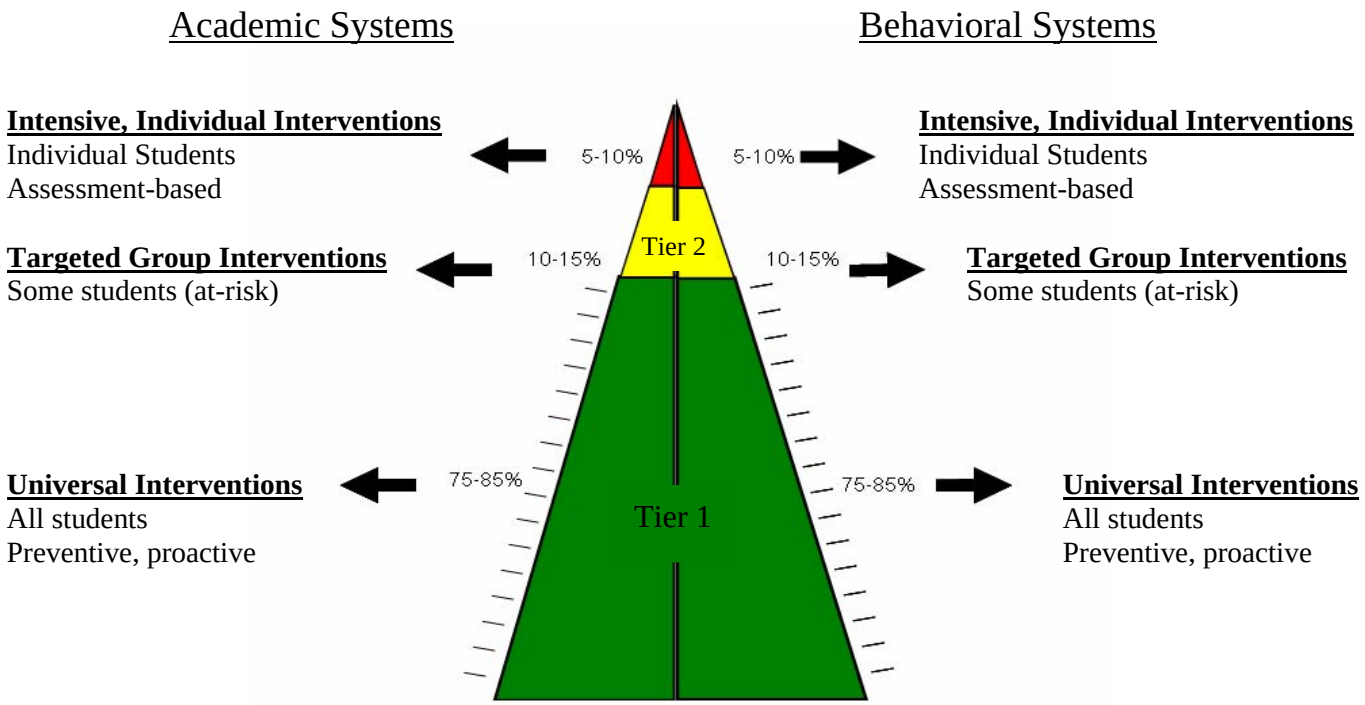
In Tier 1, all students receive high-quality, scientific researched-based instruction. This instruction is delivered by the general education teacher in the core curriculum. Using benchmarks, the core curriculum should be manageable for 75 to 85 percent of students (Good, R., Simmons, C., & Smith, S., 1998). If a significant number of students are not successful in the core curriculum, instructional and curricular variables should be analyzed to determine where the core instruction needs to be strengthened. The learning needs of the students who are least successful should also be addressed during the examination of any core instructional difficulties. Tier 2 is supplemental targeted instruction that ensures additional instruction and intervention in smaller groupings, and Tier 3 is an individualized level of intervention that provides for more supplemental individualized instruction/intervention.[1]

The important features of any tiered delivery system are that all students receive Tier 1 instruction, (i.e., a core instructional program that uses a scientifically-based curriculum for all students at their instructional level), and that intensified instruction is provided to students in direct proportion to their individual need (Tiers 2 and 3). Distinctive support structures are built into each tier and provide teachers with activities that help put into action research-based curriculum and instructional practices to improve student achievement. (A link between assessment and instruction activities in grades K-3 reading is made through the PALS Web site http://pals.virginia.edu).

Figure 1 offers a typical graphic depiction of a 3-tiered RtI model.

[1] EIRI already provides incentive funding for school divisions to provide 2½ hours (weekly) of Tier 2 supplemental targeted instruction in reading in grades K-3.

Figure 1.Three-Tiered RtI Model



Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI-Advanced Training Workshop, December 2006, W. David Tilley and George M. Batsche

The following table illustrates approximately how many students in various sized classes and schools would be in each tier. For example, in a class of 25 students, it is estimated that four students would receive Tier 2 interventions and one student would need intensive intervention in Tier 3.

Table 1. Hypothetical number of students served through 3-tier RtI Model (Based on the diagram above)

# Students in Class	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
15	15	2	1
20	20	3	1
25	25	4	1
# Students in School	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
150	150	23	8
200	200	30	10
250	250	38	13
300	300	45	15
350	350	53	18
400	400	60	20

Student Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring documents student learning over time to determine whether a student is progressing as expected in the core curriculum. Curriculum-based measures (CBMs) are frequently used as a method for progress monitoring, but other systems of progress monitoring might be utilized as well.[2]

CBMs are brief, easy to administer and score, and produce measures that are accurate indicators of a student's academic performance. Examples of CBMs include the

[2] For example, in grades K-3, the PALS grade-level word lists may be administered periodically to gauge a student's progress in word reading or the grade-level passages may be used to calculate the number of words read correctly in one minute.

number of words read correctly from grade-level text in two minutes or the total of numbers from one to ten that are correctly identified (See Appendix B).

Benefits of RtI

Implementation of a multi-tiered RtI system can provide students with learning problems that put them at-risk for failure with an opportunity to have those difficulties identified and corrected sooner. Furthermore, RtI practices can result in enhanced communication between home and school. Parents are informed more frequently of their child's progress, and more frequent home-school collaboration allows parents to become active and meaningful participants in the school staff's educational efforts. Other benefits of RtI include:

- Documents learning rates across peers on the same instruction
- Communicates the school's expectations for monitoring of student performance
- Provides collaborative assistance to teachers requesting it
- Provides the principal with a global picture of instructional practices in the school
- Identifies prevention efforts needed for children entering kindergarten
- Guides staff development efforts
- Coordinates existing intervention efforts, (i.e., child study, early reading initiatives, and Standards of Learning (SOL) remediation)
- Provides better identification of students with disabilities

Chapter Three: A Closer Look at the Essential Components

A more in-depth treatment of the three major RtI components – universal screening, tiered interventions in response to diagnostic assessment, and student progress monitoring – is helpful in developing a more thorough knowledge of response to intervention practices (responsive instruction).

Universal screening helps to identify children whose lack of response to instruction in the regular classroom should be of concern. Progress monitoring is a formative evaluation process in which frequent samplings of a student's progress is measured and analyzed, and tiered interventions are targeted instruction based on student need. When coordinated within the comprehensive curriculum provided in general education, these three practices serve to enhance the core instructional program.

Universal Screening

Universal screening serves three purposes:

1. Identification of children in need of further assessment and/or intervention
2. Provision of feedback about how a class is performing so that classroom-based curriculum or instructional issues can be identified as soon as possible
3. Identification of children who may have had a poor testing experience, if used regularly.

Universal screening is a process that uses assessments consistent with the curriculum and designed to measure specific skills or learning that all students are

expected to have achieved at certain times of the year. Usually a curriculum-based indicator is used for universal screening.

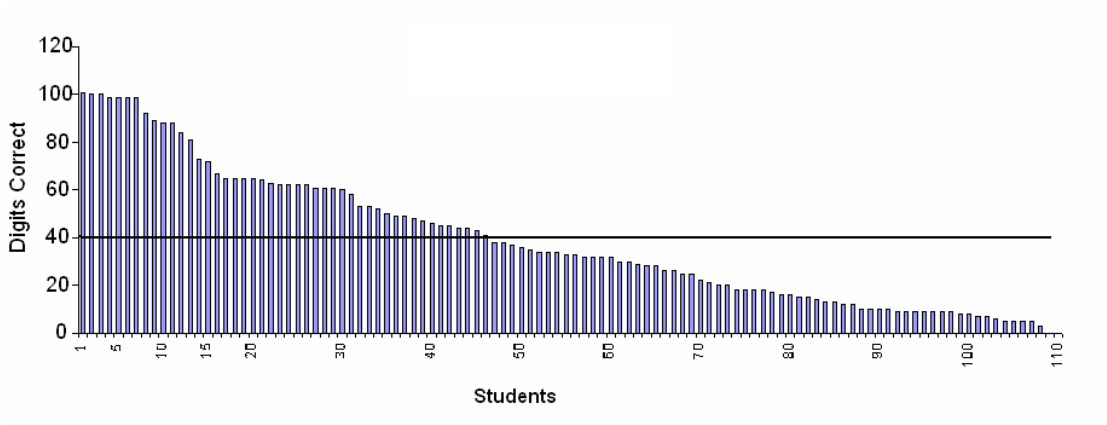
During each school year, universal screening takes place several times across grade levels. Typical times for screening are the fall, mid-year, and spring to ensure that children who need additional support do not go too long before receiving additional instruction/intervention. Analysis of student performance on screening measures helps identify the point of entry into the tiers of RtI intervention and the kinds of support needed. In the area of reading, Virginia uses the PALS in 99 percent of its school divisions. However, there are other screening devices in use around the nation. These include generic state/division generated tools and commercial tools. Screening measures are also used for mathematics and for behavior as well. It is important to remember that performance on universal screenings is used to determine each student's level of proficiency in essential academic areas.

The graph in Figure 2 represents the performance of an entire 5th grade class on a mathematics screening in September. The ***x*** axis represents individual student performance and the ***y*** axis represents the number of correct digits identified when performing addition and subtraction algorithms by each student. The black line running parallel to the *x* axis represents the expected achievement level for students.

The graph illustrates that less than half of the students are achieving at expectation. Of the 108 students screened, 46 students performed at or above the expected academic level. This information demonstrates that about 50 percent of the students do not have the prerequisite skills needed for the anticipated scope and sequence for grade 5. These data strongly suggest that the curriculum and instructional delivery should be examined and evaluated to ensure alignment with the standard (in Virginia this

would be the SOL expectation(s)). During this time, intervention should also be provided to students who performed most poorly on the screening. Note, universal screening data are used to make comparisons of both group and individual performance against core curriculum goals.

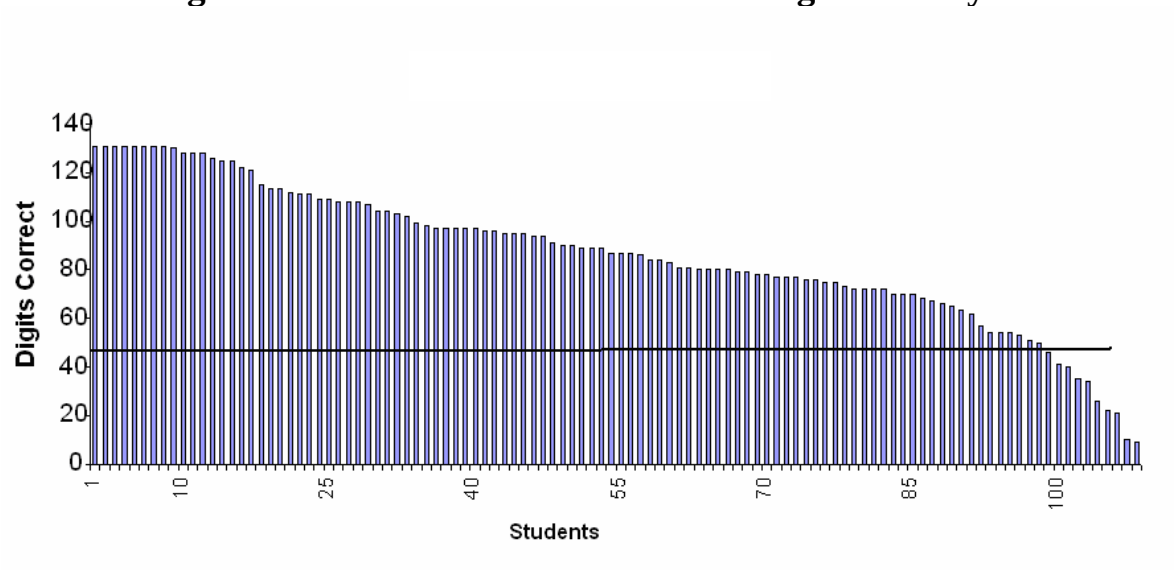
Figure 2. Fifth Grade Math Screening - September



Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI-Advanced Training Workshop, December 2006, W. David Tilley and George M. Batsche

The graph in Figure 3 represents a universal re-screening in mathematics for the same group of students four months later, in January. Notice, almost all students are performing at or above expectancy. This is an indication that the curriculum and instruction are more correctly aligned to address the development of needed skills and that the students are likely attaining those skills.

Figure 3. Fifth Grade Math Re-Screening – January



Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI-Advanced Training Workshop, December 2006, W. David Tilley and George M. Batsche

The performance of all students should be reviewed periodically by a team of educators within the school. This team can be thought of as a "Student Progress Monitoring Team." Children whose performance on screening measures raises concerns for instructional staff should be discussed by this team, and hypotheses for their lack of performance should be generated and explored. There are natural events in every child's life that account for occasional lapses in achievement, and there are any number of children whose life circumstances impact their motivation and/or ability to sustain effort. These conditions must be ruled out by a team of professionals before launching a child into a system of tiered interventions that might not be necessary.

Questions regarding a child's physical and mental health or well-being at the time of the screening might be appropriate to raise, (e.g., Are there any indications that the student came to school sick and performed poorly as a result?) Is it possible that the child or his/her family suffered a loss or trauma – a grandparent died, a parent lost a job, an

older sibling got arrested – that factored into the child's weak performance? If factors affecting a child's well-being were present during a screening, the child should be re-screened at a later, more appropriate time.

Tiered Interventions

Interventions are targeted instruction based on student need. They are designed to be coordinated with the curriculum provided in general education. In Virginia, interventions serve to enhance the core instructional program based on Virginia's SOL, and, at the same time, meet each student's diagnosed need.

Specific interventions are determined in one of two ways: by *standard protocol* or *strategic problem solving.* Standard protocol interventions match a set of research-based practices to the student's predictable patterns of under-performance, while more individually-designed interventions are the product of a strategic problem-solving process. A combination of the two offers a third (hybrid) method of determining the most appropriate intervention(s).

According to Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, and McKnight (2006) interventions are enhancements of the general education curriculum that are:

- Based on assessed student skill deficit
- Targeted to address specific and discrete skill deficits
- Intended to be short-term, explicit instruction
- Monitored frequently to document and ensure progress

Lastly, interventions are revised as necessary based on student performance. In RtI, interventions are provided at three instructional levels: Tiers 1, 2, and 3.

Tier 1 Interventions

At Tier 1, intervention is defined as the core classroom or universal instruction that all students receive. However, in addition to core classroom instruction, student progress is assessed three times per year through universal screening. Successful Tier 1 instruction should have no fewer than 75 percent of students meeting instructional expectations. Instruction at this level must be responsive to the majority of students and teachers need to provide differentiated instruction to meet individual student needs.

At the classroom or Tier 1 level, the focus of instruction is on all students (using researched-based instruction). Students are grouped in multiple ways, including whole group, small group, or one-on-one instruction being provided by the regular classroom teacher. Benchmark assessments, like PALS (in reading), are administered in the fall, winter, and spring to determine if a student is performing at grade level expectations at that particular time. All interventions are provided by the regular education teacher in the regular classroom and differentiation of instruction is based on student assessment data.

An example of universal screening and Tier 1 intervention is offered below:

> *Mrs. Dunn is a well respected and effective first-grade teacher; her students typically score well on the division's yearly high-stakes tests. She uses scientifically-based instructional methods to teach all content. She provides high-quality differentiated instruction to make sure that if her students are struggling, it is not because of inappropriate instruction. As a general policy, the student progress monitoring team at her elementary school has decided to target students scoring in the bottom 25 percentile of each first-grade class for additional assistance. (The 25th percentile is determined by the child's performance on the PALS screening.)*
>
> *At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Dunn administers the PALS screening to all of her students.*

Most students do very well on it. There are, however, five students who scored below the 25th percentile. The student progress monitoring team at Mrs. Dunn's school decided that, in addition to providing the prescribed high-quality core reading program, teachers would monitor these five students' progress on a weekly basis. In summary, all students in Mrs. Dunn's class receive Tier 1 instruction, and Mrs. Dunn records the results to see if anyone needs additional help. The data for the five struggling students are being carefully studied to determine whether Tier 1 instruction is sufficient. After monitoring the data for eight weeks, two of the students are found to be making adequate progress, while three students are still struggling.

Tier 2 Interventions

After a thorough review by the school's student progress monitoring team, a child who fails to meet instructional expectations in Tier 1, after receiving Tier 1 instruction, would move on to Tier 2 (consideration of any distractions on the home/personal/social front is appropriate). The purpose of Tier 2 is to provide supplemental support to struggling students in the general education classroom who have not met the benchmarks established for academic performance in Tier 1. A student in Tier 2 continues to receive the core curriculum and instruction in the regular classroom (Tier 1), but also receives additional interventions that supplement Tier 1 instruction and intervention.

In Tier 2, the use of research-based instruction continues in a small group setting. It is recommended that the teacher/student ratio for this level of intervention should be no greater than one to five; one to three is preferable. (Virginia's Early Intervention Reading Initiative [EIRI] funds a minimum of 30 minutes per day for supplemental reading instruction in groups of no more than five students, in addition to the core reading instruction that is already in place for the classroom.) Student progress on targeted skills is assessed using progress monitoring tools at least twice a month to ensure adequate

progress is occurring. (For example, the EIRI, grade-level word lists or running records of reading accuracy in graded texts are a common staple for progress monitoring in reading in the early grades.) The interventionist for supplemental Tier 2 instruction is determined at the school level and can include the regular classroom teacher or a specialized teacher. The setting where the supplemental instruction takes place is also designated by the school and may be within or outside the regular classroom.

Using Mrs. Dunn's class, the following is an example of Tier 2 intervention:

> *The three students who continued to struggle after Tier 1 instruction are now provided Tier 2 intervention. In addition to the high-quality, Tier 1 reading instruction they receive with Mrs. Dunn, they also receive a more intensive, small group reading intervention from Mrs. Nash, the school's reading specialist. The children are placed in a supplemental reading series, and Mrs. Nash monitors their progress in small groups.*
>
> *After 12 weeks in Tier 2, one of the three students is making adequate progress and is now reading at grade level. This student no longer requires small-group intervention and returns to Tier 1 instructional practices and interventions. The two remaining students are making some progress but are not yet reading on grade level. Mrs. Dunn and Mrs. Nash decide to continue Tier 2 interventions with one student for whom appropriate gains can be demonstrated; however, the other student's responsiveness is far below where one would expect (in light of the intensive intervention). The student progress monitoring team will review his performance data. Because this student has not made adequate progress after receiving Tier 2 services, he will receive more intensive and individualized services in Tier 3 of the RtI process.*

Tier 2 intervention depends on flexible and creative scheduling to allocate adequate time for small group interventions. Individualized instruction for the student(s), additional to that offered in the general classroom, is provided daily. Research and best

practices suggests that approximately 30 minutes be allocated for this individualized instruction. Interventions are designed to target specific areas of weakness as indicated by ongoing progress monitoring for each student. Timelines are created to measure achievement of performance goals at frequent intervals. Progress monitoring occurs at least twice a month. Interventions are provided to small groups of no more than three to five students. The interventionist for the child is determined by the school and can include classroom teachers, specialized reading/curriculum teachers, and external interventionists/consultants. It is essential to allow flexibility in Tier 2 in order that students can move from one skills group to another.

Supplemental instruction provided in this tier is in addition to the core academic instruction provided by the regular classroom teacher; these interventions do not supplant or replace the regular core instruction.

Tier 3 Interventions

Tier 3 is the level of instruction in which intensive intervention takes place. The focus of instruction is on students with marked difficulties in reading or math who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts, after it has been determined that these efforts have been appropriately targeted to the student's assessed needs. The instructional plan for Tier 3 students is even more intensive, more focused, more frequent, and more individualized. Grouping configurations for this intensive intervention are homogeneous groups with a suggested teacher/student ratio of no more than one to three, with one to one being optimal. Intensive instruction/intervention at this level is provided in addition to the core classroom instructional program (at the child's

instructional level). Progress monitoring occurs at least weekly on targeted skills. The person who delivers Tier 3 instruction is determined at the school level and is typically not the regular classroom teacher. This intensive instruction usually takes place outside of the child's primary classroom.

At this level, interventions are intensive and address specific areas of academic difficulty for individual students. The primary differences between Tier 2 and Tier 3 are the frequency with which interventions occur, the duration of particular interventions, the skill and expertise of the interventionist, and the frequency of progress monitoring. All of these adjustments are based on student responsiveness. For example, Tier 3 interventions may be provided twice a day for 30 minutes (in addition to the regular classroom-based core curriculum). Progress monitoring is conducted at least once a week, and, preferably twice a week. The duration of intervention at this tier is at least 12 weeks and may last up to 18 weeks, as in Tier 2. All interventions must be scientifically research-based.

Interventions provided in Tier 3 are the most intensive. While it may seem difficult for general education to support the intensity and frequency of intervention in Tier 3, it is important to remember that the primary purpose of this tier is to provide every possible opportunity to help struggling students succeed in the general education classroom. Navigating these tiers of intervention affords a student additional contact with the curriculum, and provides data that demonstrate that ineffective instruction has not been the reason for any lack of success on the student's part.

Here is an example of Tier 3 instruction/intervention in Ms. Dunn's class:

> *One student in Mrs. Dunn's class has failed to respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions and his failure to respond to instruction has resulted in*

> *inadequate skill development and growth. High-quality, research-validated instruction has been used with this student in Tiers 1 and 2, so the student progress monitoring team can be certain that inappropriate instruction is not the cause for his difficulties. In reviewing the student's progress, the progress monitoring team is aware that the additional support through small group instruction in Tier 3 was not effective in meeting his needs. The team decides that more intensive, individualized and specialized instruction is probably necessary. The team refers him to the school's child study team for a thorough individual evaluation of his learning style and needs.*

If a student is not responding to the intense, rigorous interventions provided in Tier 3, referral for individual evaluation to determine if the child has a disability and needs special education services would seem warranted.

The preceding information is captured in the table below.

Table 2. Example of What Occurs for (K-3) Reading in Each Tier

	Tier 1: Core Class Instruction	Tier 2: Supplemental Instruction	Tier 3: Intensive Intervention
Focus	For all students in K through 3	For students with marked reading difficulties, and who have not responded to Tier 1 efforts	For students with marked difficulties and who have not responded adequately to Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts
Instruction	Evidence-based, differentiated, comprehensive instruction on students' instructional level	Evidence-based, comprehensive instruction on students' instructional level targeting assessed needs	Sustained, intensive, scientifically-based instruction targeting diagnosed needs
Grouping	Multiple grouping formats to differentiate instruction and meet student needs	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:3, 1:4, or 1:5)	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:1 – 1:3)
Time	90 minutes per day, preferably more	Minimum of 30 minutes per day in small group in addition to 90 minutes of core reading instruction in the classroom	Minimum of two 30-minute sessions per day in small group or 1:1 addition to 90 minutes of core reading instruction
Assessment	Universal screening and benchmark assessment at beginning, middle, and end of academic year	Progress monitoring twice a month on target skill to ensure adequate progress and learning	Progress monitoring weekly on target skills to ensure adequate progress and learning
Interventionist	General education teacher	Personnel determined by school (e.g., a classroom teacher, specialized reading teacher, external interventionist)	Personnel determined by the school (e.g., a classroom teacher, a specialized reading teacher, or external interventionist)
Setting	General education classroom	Appropriate setting designated by the school; may be within or outside of the classroom	Appropriate setting designated by the school
Adapted from J. McCook Powerpoint:*Implementing a Response to Intervention Model*. Oct. 2006			

Progress Monitoring

There are three reasons for assessing and monitoring skill development:

(1) Screening - this identifies how a student is performing relative to the group or to a curriculum-based benchmark

(2) Diagnostic -if the student is under performing, the questions "Why is this happening?" and "What other information do we need?" must be answered; and

(3) Ongoing progress monitoring - this involves frequent assessment of growth. The progress of all students should be monitored, but it is of particular importance to closely monitor the progress of students whose performance is resistant to intervention. In all cases, the obtained data are used to adjust instruction and make instructional or intervention decisions.

An essential component of the RtI process, in every tier of the process, is progress monitoring. The purpose for using a progress monitoring system is to provide an ongoing, systematic method of collecting data to determine the academic, social, or behavioral performance of a student. Throughout all of the tiers, but particularly in Tiers 2 and 3, progress monitoring must occur. Tier 1 assessment consists of the universal benchmark assessments administered in the fall, winter, and spring. In Tier 1, this universal screening serves as a kind of broad stroke progress monitoring. In Tiers 2 and 3, however, diagnostic assessments are necessary to identify students' specific skill needs. These diagnostic assessments are the basis of progress monitoring.

Progress monitoring consists of quick, brief probes designed to gauge progress toward grade-level goals and to fine-tune instruction as it is delivered. Progress monitoring in Tiers 1 and 2 usually involve curriculum-based measures (grade-level lists, reading passages, or the completion of one-minute exercises). One quick way to gauge progress toward reading grade-level text is to measure the number of words read

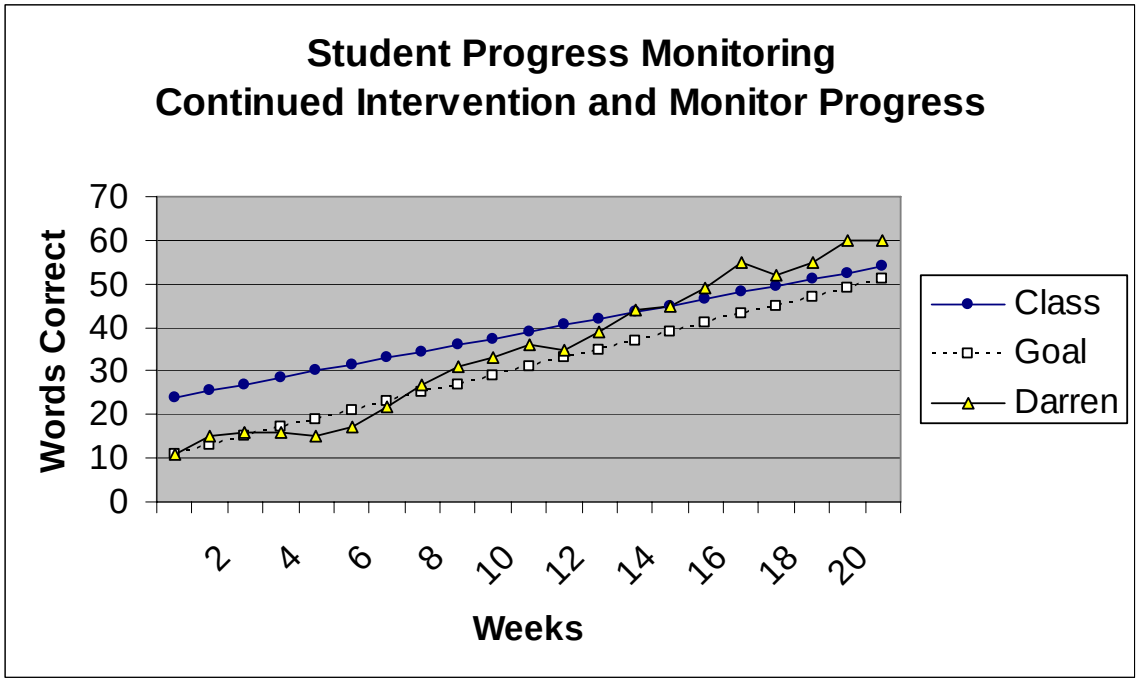
correctly in a grade-level passage in one minute. Often referred to as CBM, one-minute probes are an excellent way to spot-check progress toward a grade-level goal (See Appendix C). However, these measures will not tell us the student's instructional level or what specific skills he or she needs to move forward.

Frequent progress monitoring is a way of determining if a student is responding to an intervention so that judgments about continuing, adjusting, or replacing the intervention can be made. Without performance documentation, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness or value of an intervention. There are a variety of opinions regarding the establishment of cut-off scores to be used in determining the need for instructional support, the length of time an intervention should be given to prove effective or not, and the point at which referral for individual evaluation should be made. In all of these decisions, data and common sense should prevail. For example, a first-grade student with inadequate word reading skills on the pre-primer level in the fall of first grade should be able to read primer words halfway through the year if the goal of reading end-of-year first grade words by June is to be achieved.

Hypothetical graphic representations of student progress monitoring for reading are provided in Figures 4 and 5. In Figure 4, Darren, the student, was initially performing below the class average as revealed by universal screening. Weekly progress monitoring demonstrated that he was behind his peers during weeks 4 and 5. Darren was only reading 15 words correctly per minute while the class average was 30 words read correctly, and the goal was 20 words read correctly per minute. He was moved from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and adjustments to intervention strategies were made. As a result, he then consistently progressed until he was performing above his goal and the class average by

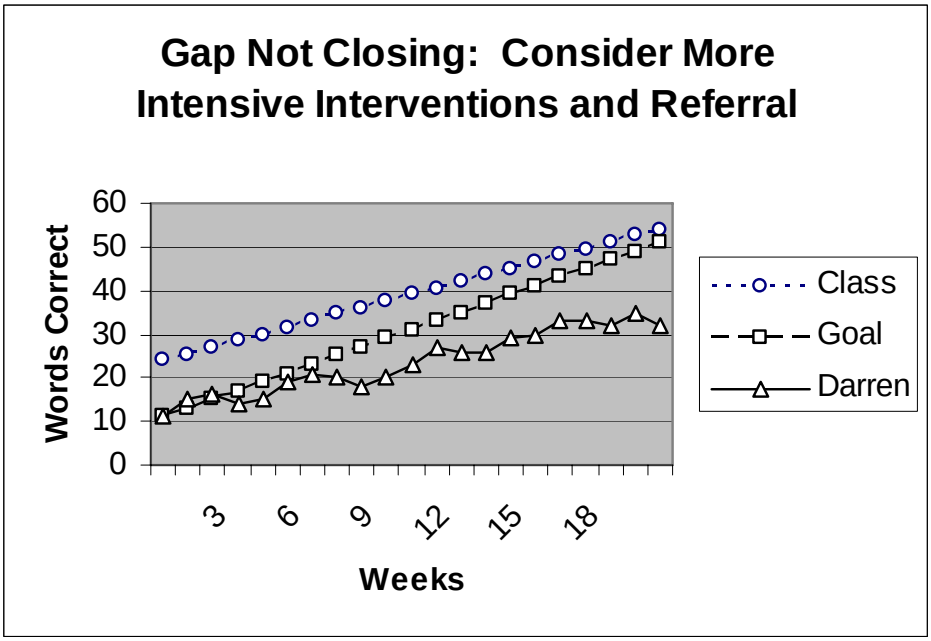
week 15. Clearly, the achievement gap was closed using the RtI process and a change of *goals* is now needed.

Figure 4. Student Progress Monitoring with Positive Outcome



The progress monitoring graph in Figure 5 tells a different story. In this illustration, Darren is not responding to the Tier 2 intervention. At 12 weeks, he is reading 25 words correctly per minute; the goal is 30 words per minute, and the class average is 40 words read correctly per minute. Darren can be referred to the student progress monitoring team to determine a more intensive course of instruction and intervention in Tier 3.

Figure 5. Student Progress Monitoring with Negative Outcome



Students who perform poorly should be discussed by the student progress monitoring team. The team examines the student's diagnostic data and determines if the student's needs are being met. The team sets goals based on the diagnostic data and sets a "goal line" (graphic representation) depicting the desired rate of progress a student needs to reach the goal from the current baseline. The student's baseline is plotted along with the class benchmark and takes into account other students' typical rate of progress. The line between where the student is and where we want the student to be is the student's goal line. If performance falls significantly below the goal line over three or four consecutive monitoring periods, the student progress monitoring team should revise the intervention plan making appropriate modifications or changes. It is during these times of discussion that the problem-solving process outlined later in this document will be helpful.

When using progress monitoring charts to make determinations regarding instructional interventions, there are two decision rules to consider. If there are three or four consecutive data points below the goal for the student's performance at the end of a pre-determined period of time (e.g., 4 to 6 weeks), a change in instructional strategies is needed. If there are three or four consecutive data points above the goal line, the performance goal for the student is too low and needs to be *raised.* Once the student is consistently performing at grade level expectations, interventions can be phased out.

About Curriculum Based Measurement - CBM

CBM was developed by Stanley Deno, Phyllis Mirkin, and others at the University of Minnesota. Roots of CBM are to be found in the Data-Based Program Modification (DBPM) model created by the two in the 1970's. CBM measures are reliable, valid and standardized, and aligned with the Virginia SOL. They tend to be extremely sensitive to student growth; they are time efficient and cost-effective. Deno, Lembke, and Anderson's Content Module, *Progress Monitoring*, provides a thorough review and additional information. See Appendix D for an illustration of how graphed data are easier to interpret than data displayed in a tabular form.

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is an approach to measuring or assessing student growth and proficiency in core educational skills. Using probes of one or two minute durations, classroom teachers and other staff are able to assess student performance frequently and accurately. CBMs are used to assess growth of discrete skills critical to learning, (e.g., oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and math computation.) Data collected through CBM is easy to graph and analyze. One caveat,

however, is that CBMs will *not* provide student grade level performance or what specific skills must be addressed to move them forward. Teachers will need to rely on more diagnostic data, such as the PALS assessment (or similar formative assessments).

Using Excel to Plot Student Progress

To plot data points of student progress on a personal computer, one can go to the following Web site and proceed accordingly:

hhtp://www.oswego.edu/~mcdougal/web_site_4_11_2005/index.html

1. Click on "Academic Monitoring"
2. Click on "Curriculum Based Measurement"
3. Click to download template
4. Enter dates and scores from progress monitoring probes
5. Click graph/data

Note, when data points are scattered on the graph, it is hard to determine whether or not the student is going to make it to the goal mark by the end of the year. In cases like this, drawing a trend line will help determine the likely slope of a student's achievement level at the end of the school year.

To plot a *trend line* when charting the data points do the following:

6. Right click on the first data point (all points will become highlighted)
7. Right click to add trend line
8. Add the goal line to establish where the student needs to be at the end of the school year. Compare that line to the trend line.

Illustrations:

3rd grade Math

A third grade teacher was concerned that several of her students did not have the basic addition and subtraction skills needed to solve the types of problems presented in the math units. In October, using a universal screening method, she identified four students who had difficulty solving addition and subtraction problems on unit math tests and weekly math probes. Her goal for the students was to increase the number of addition and subtraction problems they were able to complete correctly.

In consultation with the school progress monitoring team, a four week intervention was designed. The four students would work with the teacher three times a week for fifteen minutes completing addition and subtraction fact games (Tier 1). Progress-monitoring data on students' rate and accuracy of answering addition and subtraction problems correctly was collected using math fact probes at the end of each session. At four weeks, the teacher evaluated the data and determined that two students met the goal and exited them from the intervention. The other two students' interventions were modified to address weaknesses specific to subtraction. The teacher provided additional instruction to help the students understand the algorithms for subtraction, used a think-aloud strategy, and color-coded activity sheets. On the modified plan, one student improved while the other student continued to have difficulty completing addition and subtraction problems quickly and accurately. At this time, further analysis of this student's math performance is ongoing with an expanded problem-solving team considering his needs (Tier 2).

1st Grade Reading

Mrs. Jones, a first grade teacher, began to analyze her Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) data to write Personal Literacy Plans for her students who were not performing on grade level in literacy. She found that about 20 percent of her class did not meet the grade-level standards for

literacy and had particular difficulty with phonemic awareness. She brought her concern to the other two first grade teachers and they decided to supplement their first grade literacy curriculum for all twelve students who did not meet the standard in phonemic awareness. These students' first intervention was a standard-protocol intervention. The students came together with one of the classroom teachers three times a week for 30 minutes (Tier 1). The targeted skills were initial and final phoneme segmentation and blending of two and three phoneme words. Their progress was monitored with weekly probes.

At five weeks the students' progress monitoring probes were evaluated. Two students met the target of 80 percent accuracy by successfully segmenting and blending phonemes and were exited from the intervention. Six students were on track to meet the target at the end of ten weeks and four students demonstrated limited progress. The intervention for these four students was modified to be more intense (smaller group size, more sessions, added more review and practice – Tier 2). At the end of ten weeks, eight students met the target, and only two students did not demonstrate progress in the targeted segmentation and blending skills. These two students were brought to the school progress monitoring team to consider Tier 3 interventions. Should the students not respond to appropriate Tier 3 interventions, referral for an individual assessment would be given serious consideration.

RtI and Behavior

While RtI can be used to identify and provide support for students with potential specific learning disabilities. it can also be used to intervene on behalf of students who display behavioral problems as well. There is an assortment of reasons why students act inappropriately, ranging from "won't do it" to "can't do it." Academic success and behavior are strongly connected and need to be considered in tandem when appropriate.

Unexpected behavioral difficulties in students should be explored as vigorously as unexpected poor academic performance. Using an RtI approach to behavior, behavioral

data, such as observations and office referral patterns, are methodically collected. Behavioral data results are then subjected to analysis and hypothesis development. Research-based approaches that support the student in decreasing inappropriate behaviors are developed, and positive ways of thinking about academic and social life are communicated and taught. Various evidence-based behavioral interventions should be considered: the range of reinforcement schedules; social learning exercises (e.g., teaching expected behaviors through modeling and role playing); and cognitive behavioral techniques to teach "thinking skills" (e.g., problem solving, impulse control, or anger management) (Washington State Department of Education, 2006) to name a few. Oftentimes replacement behaviors are identified and established. Virginia's Effective Schoolwide Discipline program lends itself to easy incorporation into a school or school division's RtI activities.

The Virginia Department of Education has published two documents related to effective schoolwide discipline in Virginia: The first document, *An Introduction to Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia: A Statewide Initiative to Support Positive Academic Behavioral Outcomes for All Students,* provides an overview of the initiative and a blueprint for implementing effective schoolwide discipline. The second publication, *Functional Behavioral Assessment, Behavioral Intervention Plans, and Positive Intervention and Supports: An Essential Part of Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia,* provides the steps for conducting a functional behavior assessment and how to write an effective behavioral intervention plan. See Appendix F for a behavioral case study.

Chapter Four: Movement Between the Tiers: Analysis, Decision- Making, and Planning

Instructional decisions about needed supports and interventions are inevitable as teachers make hundreds of instructional decisions in any one week. Movement between the tiers of support and intervention should be guided by the thinking and planning of a group of collaborating professionals studying the best available data.

The ***standard protocol model*** of RtI uses a set or series of interventions based on the nature of a particular problem to guide instructional/intervention decisions. For example, a school might be using a reading series that has several standard protocols for addressing reading fluency or reading comprehension difficulties. When used systematically with students, improvements can be realized immediately. The ***problem solving approach*** to RtI, however, does not presume that there is a standard protocol for particular problems. The problem solving model is a decision-making process that utilizes the skills of professionals from different disciplines to develop and evaluate intervention plans for improved student performance. This guidance document promotes a *hybrid* approach gleaned from the best of these two predominant models.

Based on the scientific method, the problem solving process is a very useful tool in the decision-making process surrounding instructional intervention(s). The five steps of the problem solving method are:

(a) ***Define the problem*** (Is there a problem? What is it? Be specific!)

> When a concern is raised, the first step is to review the concern and attempt to identify the problem. The decision making team should first review existing student data to determine specific problems. For example, a student should not be identified as simply having an academic problem.

The team should narrow the problem down (based on available data) to identify the deficit skill area(s) such as phonemic awareness, math calculations, vocabulary, reading comprehension, or peer interactions.

(b) ***Analyze the problem*** (Why is it happening?)

Once the problem has been defined, the decision making team needs to develop a hypothesis as to why the problem is occurring and continuing. This involves analyzing those variables that might be contributing to and sustaining the problem. Under what conditions is the problem exhibited? Are single-syllable words as difficult as multi-syllabic words? Is math comprehension stronger than math calculation? The best treatment for a problem starts with the most accurate diagnosis possible.

(c) ***Develop a plan*** (What shall we do about it?)

Once the problem has been analyzed, the student progress monitoring team identifies interventions that will meet the student's needs. The team does this by developing a plan that includes: an implementation time frame (e.g., 4 weeks, 6 weeks, or 8 weeks); the specific intervention most likely to succeed; the frequency of the interventions (how often will the intervention be provided and for how many minutes per week?); who will provide the intervention (e.g., classroom teacher, Title I teacher, etc.); and a time frame to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The student's plan should outline the goal for progress.

Once a student has been identified as needing intervention, a written plan of intervention is drafted. The intervention plan defines the problem and describes what will be done. The plan should include the following elements:

- *Statement of the problem*
- *What is going to be done differently*
- *Who is going to do it*
- *When (during the day/week/month)*
- *Where*
- *How long the intervention will be tried*
- *Evidence (to be examined) of the intervention's effectiveness*

The plan will include a description of the specific intervention and the duration of the intervention. Individuals responsible for providing any supplemental help are identified and measurable outcomes are be stipulated. It is also critical to include a description of the measurement and the recording techniques that will be used. The progress monitoring schedule is an essential component of the written intervention plan. (Adapted from McCook, 2006)

(d) ***Implement the plan***

> Interventions must be implemented with reliability and fidelity. Qualified staff must deliver the interventions according to the prescribed process and in the prescribed time frame. Schools should document their delivery of the interventions using multiple sources (e.g., observation notes, lesson plans and grade books, student work reflecting instructional elements, and graphs of student progress).

(e) ***Evaluate the plan*** (Did the plan work?)

> In order to determine if the intervention is working for a student, the team must collect data through progress monitoring. The frequency of progress monitoring depends on the tier of intervention, but in all cases the process is similar. A student's current performance and progress is compared to that of peers (and the student's earlier performance), and a target goal is developed. If the student's performance falls below the goal line, the current intervention is not working and new interventions need to be explored by the student progress monitoring team.

It is critical to put in place a system for making decisions about instruction and intervention that maximizes the use of instructional strategies with a proven likelihood of success. In order to determine the effectiveness of an intervention under either method – standard protocol or problem solving – student progress monitoring must occur on a frequent basis. The effectiveness of an intervention will be revealed when analyzing the student progress monitoring data.

Chapter Five: Successful Implementation of RtI

A successful RtI system requires the commitment of many people, including parents, teachers, specialists, administrators, and paraprofessionals. A school division's plan for implementing RtI should include an assessment of the division's current needs relative to leadership, teams, curriculum, screening, and professional development. Successful and sustained implementation of RtI is dependent upon central administration's commitment and support. Support for RtI may be evidenced by:

- Adopting the position that RtI is a *shared* responsibility of the entire education system; not a product of only general education or special education efforts
- Including RtI as part of strategic and long-term school improvement planning; including a phase-in plan relative to individual schools
- Commitment of resources that includes staff development, technological support, and supplemental programs and materials
- Coordination with other division- or school-level initiatives such as *EIRI*, *Reading First*, or *Instructional Support Teams* (where these exist)

The central administration of a school division should provide oversight and leadership for implementation of RtI activities. Developing a division-level RtI oversight team is the responsibility of the division superintendent or designee. Collegial support from a team representing division-and school-level professionals should prove helpful in carrying out this mission. This team assists in promoting and gaining consensus across the division, creating divisionwide infrastructures, and setting up and maintaining student progress monitoring teams in each school.

Consensus Building, Infrastructure Development, and Implementation

Researchers identify three developmental phases that school divisions must navigate in order to implement RtI practices successfully: consensus building, development of an infrastructure, and implementation (adapted from NASDSE Webinar, December 2006).

Consensus Building

Consensus building is the process of understanding the beliefs and practices that support RtI and the support needed by those who will be implementing it. Assuming basic understandings of child and adolescent development, the successful implementation of RtI is built on a shared understanding of the dynamics of teaching, learning, and improving student performance. Because RtI represents a framework for the delivery of instruction and affects the entire program, consensus must be reached on its (RtI's) purpose and use.

In adopting an RtI approach to organizing teaching and measurement, strong consensus should be reached on fundamental concepts, such as:

- Lack of achievement may likely be a function of the instructional program, not the individual child
- At-risk children need to demonstrate continuous academic growth
- RtI practices support academic growth
- Ongoing staff development that targets instruction, assessment, and evidence-based interventions is necessary for all educators

Examining and analyzing student performance data should be the focal point of the consensus building process. It is insightful to show school staff and parents what their children can and cannot do, what they are struggling with, what the school has been doing, and how the data tell a story. Looking at data to answer questions about instruction and intervention supports the application of research-based practices.

Infrastructure Development

Division and school leadership teams should examine policies and resources to determine what gaps exist in forming the infrastructure or foundation that will support a successful RtI process. At a minimum, leadership should examine such questions as:

- Whether core programs are meeting the needs of 80 percent of students
- Whether the school operates from an "all children can learn" philosophy
- Whether there is a willingness to allow data to guide decision making
- Whether there is true collaboration between special education and general education
- Whether the formation of student progress monitoring teams (or the transformation of a current school-based "study" team into one) is practical and desirable at both division and school levels
- Whether there is an adequate system, including technology, to support data collection and analysis that provides timely feedback to teachers
- The availability of supplemental programs and the capacity to match those programs to the needs identified in the universal screening and progress monitoring practices; and
- Whether flexible staffing can be achieved to accommodate the delivery of Tier 2

and Tier 3 interventions.

Implementation

If consensus regarding the possibilities and practices of RtI is reached with a critical mass of team members, and if an adequate infrastructure has been put into place, specific activities leading to full implementation of RtI may be initiated. These might include:

- Analysis of division/school-wide data
- Consideration of approaches to universal screening
- Review and selection of supplemental programs and materials matched to needs identified through data analysis (tiered interventions)
- Adoption of approaches and resources for progress monitoring, and the accompanying staff development for those faculty and staff members who will be conducting it.

A growing body of research supports RtI practices and the use of curriculum-based measures. These must be recognized and used to their fullest potential in order to improve student learning for all children.

The role of the school principal in student progress monitoring

The unit of analysis for determining the success (or failure) of RtI is determined at the school level; and the principal plays a major role. The cause of failure for many student support teams is lack of informed and sustained leadership at the administrative level. In order for an RtI process to work effectively, the principal must take on the role

of instructional leader. As the instructional leader in the school building, the principal will want to oversee the work of the student progress monitoring team(s).[3]

The purpose of the student progress monitoring team is to function as a problem solving entity at the school building level. Each progress monitoring team member plays an important role in assuring that: 1) specific, measurable, and commonly accepted terms are used to define problems/concerns; 2) all significant data about a child are provided and considered; 3) intervention alternatives are thoroughly considered and explored; 4) selected interventions are defined so that all stakeholders know precisely *what* the intervention is, *where* it will occur, *how* long it will last, and *who* will be providing it. (McCook, p. 45)

The number of members on a student progress monitoring team varies. Experience suggests a minimum of three to a maximum of eight or nine. Comprised primarily of general education staff, team membership should reflect the diversity that exists among the professionals in a school building. Any of the following professionals within a school would be an appropriate team member of the RtI student progress monitoring team or oversight committee:

- General education teacher and/or special education classroom teacher
- Instructional specialist
- School counselor
- School psychologist
- School nurse
- School social worker (McCook, p. 44)

[3] Many schools already have multi-disciplinary teams – such as Teacher Assistance Teams, Child Study Teams, Literacy Teams – that can easily be "converted " to perform the work of student progress monitoring as conceptualized here.

There are numerous other individuals that could serve on the team as well; the above is not an exhaustive list.

In order to maximize the impact of the team, the principal should strive to ensure that team members possess most of the following attributes: a commitment to the school's instructional goals, especially as these seek to maximize the progress of at-risk students; knowledge of multiple teaching strategies and interventions; respect of peers; experience with disaggregating and analyzing data; and a general ability to map a course of improvement for students. (McCook, pp. 43-44)

A Word About Change

Successful implementation of RtI activities will depend upon the vigilance of the division superintendent and the professionals appointed to the division-level team that oversees the implementation of RtI. This team will meet with success to the extent that it successfully builds consensus within the school division, creates infrastructures at the division and school levels that efficiently support RtI activities, and guides and oversees implementation across the division and its schools.

Outcomes are affected by a group's adaptability to change. The degree of difficulty a group has with change will vary according to what changes the system has already successfully experienced. Teams implementing RtI, at both the division and school level, will need to plan to support individuals prone to difficulties in navigating change. This might require some level of professional development at the school and/or division level. The following pages should be helpful in clarifying roles and responsibilities of divisionwide and school level teams (and team members). All

movement toward change should be framed within the context of improved outcomes for all students.

RtI Division-level Leadership Team

Team Tasks	Team Needs
Assemble multi-disciplinary team	Team formation skills
Secure "buy-in" on beliefs of responsive instruction from all invested parties in division	Ability to lead group learning
Conceptualize instruction in three tiers and identify instructional supports	Collaboration skills
Become familiar with content of RtI guidance document	Ability to perform a needs assessment with division schools
Assess needs of school teams and monitor these needs	Understanding of data collection
Attend to state and divisionwide practices and needs regarding screening and diagnostic assessment of at-risk students	Expanded knowledge of student progress monitoring systems/processes
Provide professional development to school-level members	Knowledge of existing screening & diagnostic assessments
Provide support as needed to principals	Information from a needs assessment

Considerations

Anticipate some resistance to the "new" approach

Attend to role defining/clarifying

Expect confusion and frustration

Ensure team access to school performance data, i.e., SOL/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Establish consistency of RtI processes across division

School-level Student Progress Monitoring Team

Team Tasks	Team Needs
Ensure effective school instruction	Ways to measure effectiveness
Monitor progress of all students	Skills for interpreting student performance data
Identify Tier 1, 2, and 3 instructional interventions/supports in school	Criteria for knowing when to move a student from one tier to another
Educate parents about RtI practices	
Secure professional development for staff as needed	
Oversee development and maintenance of screening and diagnostic assessment for students who are at risk	

Considerations

Confusion and some frustration

Fine discriminations in deciding movement among tiers.
While performance on progress monitoring is indicative of how well a child is responding to intervention, all factors should be considered in determining movement among the tiers. The lines between the tiers are blurred and there is no clear cut delineation in what definitively constitutes each tier. The student progress monitoring team should look at all aspects of the student and how they are responding to intervention in deciding which tier placement best suits the child.

Limitations of student progress monitoring systems

Principal

Principal's Tasks

Familiarize school student progress monitoring team with notion of responsive instruction

Help team see how this is not a new thing or movement; it is an evolution from previous practice(s)

Help team procure resources and professional development as needed

Principal's Needs

Majority of progress monitoring team members are general education

Specialists on team as well

Skills to help team evaluate its performance and identify its needs

Help team see how current affairs are continuous with immediate past

Considerations

Staff confusion about what is general education and what is special education responsibilities

Parent need for information and explanation(s)

Establish most of criteria for movement from one tier to another

Professional development activities that will advance functioning of student progress monitoring/problem-solving teams

Teacher

Teacher's Tasks	Teacher's Needs
Provide effective instruction	Knowledge of effective instruction and effective supports/interventions
Assess students: screen; diagnose those identified at risk; monitor student progress in manner consistent with student's tier of support	Knowledge of curriculum-based measurement and data collection
Consult with student progress monitoring team when gains stop or progress below desirable rate	Ability to analyze data and represent student progress graphically
Coordinate instructional support and universal instruction with parent in mind	

Considerations

Adjusting expanded data collection and interpretation demands

Developing comfort and fluency with new skills

Explaining that new practices are consistent with immediate past practice(s)

Specialist (Reading Specialist, Guidance Counselor, Speech Pathologist, School Psychologist, School Social Worker, Special Educator)

Specialist's Tasks	Specialist's Needs
Fully participate on student progress monitoring/problem solving team	Knowledge of general instruction supports/interventions
Provide specialized knowledge as appropriate and requested	Knowledge of data collection
Support instructional efforts as much as possible	Knowledge of the different purposes of assessment (screening; diagnostic; monitoring progress toward grade-level goal)
	Ability to analyze and interpret student performance data
	Willingness to learn new and possibly different ways of operating

Considerations

Possible feelings of inadequacy on matters related to classroom instruction (this will vary from specialist to specialist)

Chapter Six: RtI and Parents

Parents serve as educators for their children. Divisionwide and school-based RtI (student progress monitoring) teams should promote the understanding of RtI with parents and the general public. In non-technical language, educators need to help them know and understand that:

1. RtI is based on federal law, and it evolves out of the experience of practitioners and researchers in general and special education.
2. RtI is designed to provide instructional interventions for struggling students in general education at the earliest signs of difficulty.
3. The student progress data collected in the RtI process will be beneficial should it be determined that an individual assessment of a child is needed.
4. There are tiers of instructional intervention support and intensity that are implemented before referral for an individual assessment for special education is made.
5. Interventions are used at each tier.
6. Parents will be kept abreast of their children's responses to intervention in a regular and frequent manner.
7. Parents will be included in all instructional decisions about their children.

It is presumed that schools are following best practices and including parents in all educational decisions that are made about their children. When a decision to refer a child for individual testing is made, it should come as no surprise to parents that general education staff has unsuccessfully tried multiple interventions and instructional strategies to help their children make adequate academic progress. It is at the point of suspecting

that a student has a disability, and deciding to conduct an individual assessment of a child, that statutory protections regarding special education eligibility should be invoked. Of course, school authorities would have been responsive to parent requests for individual assessment at any point earlier in the academic intervention process as well (see Appendix A – Problem Solving Identification Chart).

Chapter Seven: Additional Considerations

While change itself can be difficult, change that affects the most vulnerable of a learning system's children (and parents) has the potential to present greater than average challenges. Informing all individuals affected by a change, and all potential partners in making change happen, tends to minimize many of the unanticipated challenges. This chapter briefly addresses some issues associated with implementing RtI:

- How does cultural diversity factor into RtI practice?
- Where does the money come from to implement RtI practices?
- How do the homeless and those less than proficient in English factor into RtI practices?
- How do professional groups in the community that provide services to children obtain information and education about RtI?
- How does RtI "fit in" with other educational initiatives?

Cultural Diversity

Over the past two decades, educators have learned much about ethnic differences and cultural diversity. RtI activities incorporate an understanding of each student's ethnic and cultural origins and characteristics and how these contribute to a child's unique educational profile. Ethnic or cultural differences might place some limitation on a student's school experiences. Response to intervention activities in a school division take into consideration each student's unique ethnic and cultural heritage when evaluating learning problems.

Allied Professionals

While the preceding chapter outlined the need to inform parents of RtI activities, it is necessary to consider the need to educate and inform other professionals who provide services to children. It is helpful for school divisions to inform pediatricians and mental health practitioners about RtI. These individuals are frequently consulted by parents about the medical and psychological needs of their children. If these professionals have familiarity with the school division's RtI initiative, they can be better allies in identifying student needs and collaborating on the delivery of needed services.

Children in more severe need, and especially those in need of community social services and resources, have professionals working with them – social workers, juvenile probation officers, court diversion personnel – who need to be knowledgeable in the ways of school-based and division-based RtI practices. These public agencies have a good working knowledge of special education practices and procedures but they will need active education on RtI and its relationship to children and family support.

Homeless Children and English Language Learners

Children who are English language learners (ELL), as well as children who are homeless, present unique challenges to professional educators. A family's inability to support instructional efforts initiated at school makes it more difficult for the child to learn at a consistent rate and keep pace with other children in the classroom. Children who do not have the same household from one evening to the next, or do not have a place where school lessons can be reviewed and homework completed, are at risk for difficulties in learning. Educators must be aware of students facing these issues in order

for them to be factored into developing the most appropriate type and level of intervention.

Funding

The question of how RtI activities will be funded is inescapable, but not without some answers. Title I funds can be expended to support students in general education classrooms who are under age 21 and are not meeting benchmarks in Tier 1 instruction. Title I funds are also appropriate to use for students who are academically disadvantaged but do not have a recognized disability. Those students who learn at a much slower rate than their grade-level peers and are considered at risk of not meeting state standards can benefit from Title I funds as well.

Title I monies can be used to provide supplemental instruction developed in consultation with the regular classroom teacher. This supplemental instruction must be based upon the results of assessments and teacher/parent recommendations. Nothing would be more appropriate in an RtI context than for general education staff, EIRI personnel, and Title I professionals to be working together to identify student need, design appropriate and effective interventions, and closely monitor student response and progress. In schools where Title I funds are provided in a *targeted assistance* manner, students eligible for intervention are those meeting documented selection criteria, whereas in schools where Title I funds are provided in a *schoolwide* manner, eligible children include the entire school population.

The following are some ways that Title I funds might be used to support RtI activities:

- Provision of small group supplemental instruction (Tier 1, 2, or 3)

- Creative use of personnel and resources while maintaining integrity of the law
- Increased opportunities for supplemental instruction (before and/or after school, extended week/year)

The implementation of a research-based RtI process meets Title I expectations for data collection and analysis.

Under certain conditions, IDEA 2004 allows school divisions to use federal IDEA Part B funds for initiatives not strictly for students with disabilities. Under these conditions, it is possible that Part B funds could be used to support development of RtI practices.

EIRI

Virginia's EIRI has been providing a foundation for response to intervention activities for more than ten years. Since 1997, through the state-provided universal screening for reading in grades K-3 (PALS), EIRI has provided incentive funding for school divisions to provide additional reading instruction to students identified as at risk for reading difficulties. Funds are allocated according to each division's "ability to pay," and school boards agree to use the funding to provide two and one half hours per week of additional reading intervention to identified students. The extra hours of additional instruction must be over and above the instruction students receive in the core classroom. EIRI funds can and should be expended to support students in the general education classroom in grades K-3 who are not meeting PALS benchmarks in Tier 1 instruction. EIRI funds can also be merged or pooled with Title I funds to plan both Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in reading. EIRI monies can be used to provide supplemental reading instruction and intervention developed in consultation with the regular classroom teacher.

This supplemental instruction must be based upon the results of EIRI assessment which may include, but is not limited to, PALS.

The following are some ways that the EIRI incentive funding might be used to support RtI activities:

- Provision of two and one-half hours of weekly, small-group supplemental reading instruction
  (in groups with teacher-to-student ratios of no more than 1:5)
- Creative use of personnel and resources (while maintaining integrity of the EIRI legislation)
- Increased opportunities for supplemental reading instruction.

Summary Comment

Responsive instruction is consistent with Virginia's ongoing efforts at school improvement and school reform. The Virginia Department of Education is committed to working with all school divisions in implementing RtI in a fashion that is comprehensive and that promotes integration with other programs.

Chapter Eight: Fidelity of Implementation

Fidelity of implementation has to do with following methods and models that have been shown to be effective through practice and research. For RtI to be successful in addressing current instructional challenges, all components need to be implemented with a high degree of integrity. Researchers have documented that numerous failures of education reforms and practices can be attributed to poor implementation (NRCLD, 2006, p. 4-1). When initiatives are adopted in name only, without fidelity to essential program design and features, results are unpredictable and frequently poor.

Fidelity of Implementation to What?

Assuming that instruction is being delivered as intended, fidelity of implementation needs to be extended to the essential RtI elements of universal screening, student progress monitoring, and tiered interventions. RtI's effectiveness will be dependent upon a school division's commitment to the philosophical principles of RtI and vigilance of implementation. The success of the divisionwide and school team, will depend on skills of individual team members and coordination among them. Team members will need to be frank with each other about professional development needs, funding, and evaluation of effectiveness. In sum, fidelity of implementation begins with the school division committing itself to effective leadership and evaluation of the initiative effectiveness.

Periodic evaluation of universal screening and progress monitoring tools and procedures should ensure that instructional interventions are being carried out with fidelity. In the event that data collected through the RtI process are to be used for

eventual eligibility determination, it will be critical for eligibility teams to know that the implementation of previous interventions has been accomplished in as faithful a manner as possible.

In short, fidelity of implementation ensures that instruction is intentional, that data used to make instructional interventions are collected and analyzed in a thorough manner, and that progress monitoring is conducted in as responsible and reliable a manner as possible.

A list of potential barriers to implementing RtI with fidelity includes:

- Low-quality interventions (not scientific, research-based)
- Lack of fidelity to implementation process (time, frequency, duration, knowledgeable teachers)
- Inappropriate targets for progress monitoring (word ID fluency, passage reading)
- Inconsistent professional development (staff transition in/out of schools, training opportunities).

(National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, www.nrcld.org)

Chapter Nine: Proceeding Together With a Critical Eye

With responsive instruction, growth in instructional, assessment, and intervention skills will enable persons working in the Commonwealth's school systems to comprehend this "memo of the future" with relative ease.

November 9, 2010

Dear Colleague:

Just a couple of notes about Darren as he transfers from my school to yours:

- *He was only in my school for 14 months.*
- *His family moved quite a bit before that; we hope this current move does not set him back.*
- *He came to us as a student receiving Tier 3 interventions and support in reading and math; we have been successful in moving him from Tier 2 into Tier 1, almost completely, in both content areas.*
- *He might drift back to Tier 2 in math; he will probably require brief Tier 2 intervention in written language in the near future.*
- *His behavior seems to vary with his feelings of success.*

Best of luck with this wonderful youngster who continues to be at-risk.

Sincerely,

Faye Billingham
Principal

Our purpose in writing this document has been twofold: to comply with federal law that requires states to provide alternative ways that aid the special education eligibility process for children with a specific learning disability, and to provide Virginia's educators with the best of what is currently known about the evolving

instructional practice known as Response to Intervention. Ongoing study of RtI leads to the understanding that we have been engaged in many of these practices in many places for many years. Although RtI practices have not been studied extensively outside of the realms of K-3 classrooms in the core subject area of reading, their extension into the core subject areas of mathematics and writing and into the middle and high school grades is taking place. The language of RtI, and Virginia's responsive instructional practices, will increasingly restructure the way of teaching children and communicating with each other about academic progress and needs. The Virginia Department of Education welcomes and looks forward to the challenge of facilitating this work.

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Virginia SOA, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Accountability/soafulltxt.pdf

Virginia SOQ, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE,suptsmemos/2006/inf135b.pdf

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RtI Resources and References

The Iris Center
http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
http://www.nasdse.org/projects.cfm?pageprojectid=23

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SERC, *RtI: Development of a Written Intervention Plan*:
http://ctserc.org/rti/writtenplan.shtml

Virginia Department of Education, *An Introduction to Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia*

Virginia Department of Education (2005). *Functional Behavioral Assessment, Behavioral Intervention Plans, and Positive Intervention and Supports: An Essential Part of Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia*

Progress Monitoring

AIMSWEB
http://www.edformation.com/

DIBELS
http:/dibels.uoregon.edu/

Intervention Central
http://www.interventioncentral.org/

National Center on *Student* Progress Monitoring
http://www.studentprogress.org/

Reading Research and Intervention

Arbor Day Stories for Kids
http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/arbor-day/kids-short-stories/the-little-tree-that-longed-for-other-leaves.html

Florida Center for Reading Research
http://www.fcrr.org/

Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement
http://idea.uoregon.edu/projects/projects.html

Mega-Matters Analyses of Intervention
http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/sped/projects/ose/information/mega/toc/html

What Works Clearinghouse
http://www.whatworks.ed.gov

Virginia Department of Education
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/title1/Interventions.pdf

Selecting Scientifically Validated Curricula

The Access Center
http://www.k8accesscenter.org

The What Works Clearing House
http://www.w-w-c.org

Policy and Law Resources about RtI

Federal Office of Special Education
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities
http://www.nrcld.org/

Appendices

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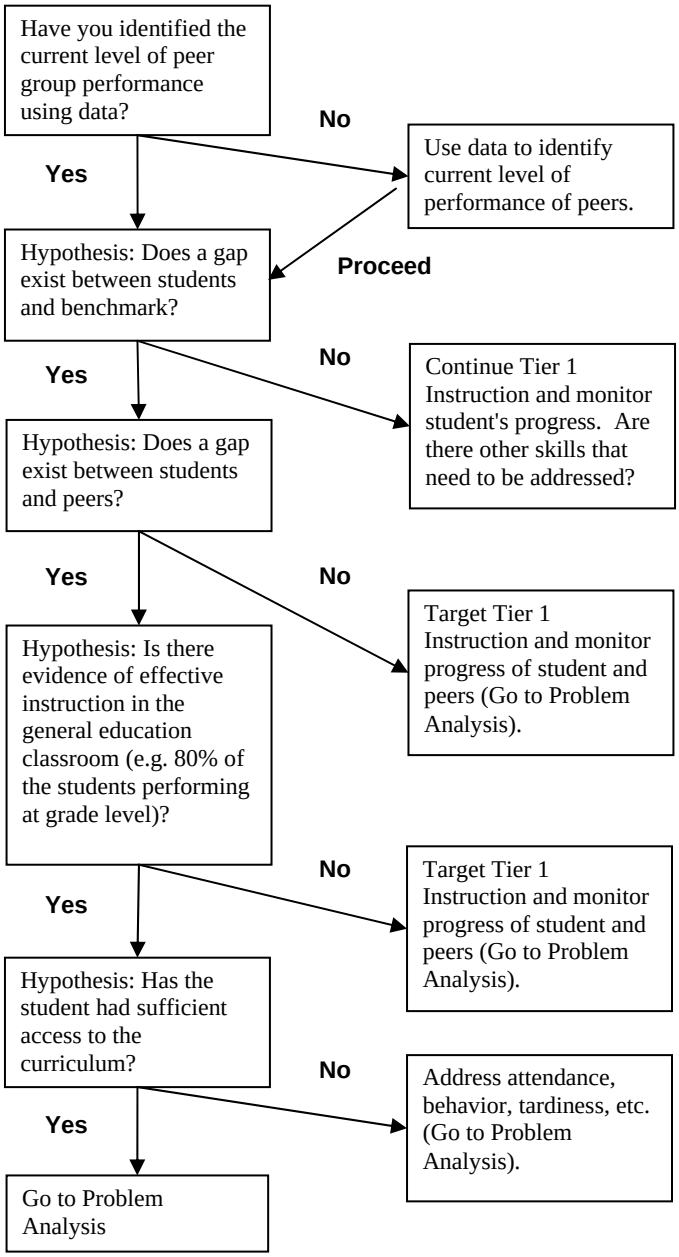
Appendix A

Problem Identification Chart



Workshop at NASP Convention 2006, W. David Tilley & George M. Batsche
Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI-Advanced Professional Training

Appendix B

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)

Monitoring

Measurement Procedures for Monitoring Progress

Area	Materials	Administration and Scoring Procedures	Durations and Measurement	Frequency and Measurement
Reading	Randomly selected passages from long-term goal material	Standardized procedures	1 Minute	1-2 times/week
Math	Randomly selected problems from long-term goal material	Standardized procedures	2 Minutes	1-2 times/week
Spelling	Randomly selected words from long-term goal material	Standardized procedures	2 Minutes	1 time/week
Written Expression	Story starter or topic sentence	Standardized procedures	3 Minutes	1 time/week

Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI-Advanced Professional Training Workshop at NASP Convention 2006. W. David Tilley & George M. Batsche

Appendix C

Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) Probes

Reading Probe

Reading Probe

The Little Tree That Longed for Other Leaves

by Friedrieh Ruckert
There was a little tree that stood in the woods through both good and stormy weather, and it was covered from top to bottom with needles instead of leaves. The needles were sharp and prickly, so the little tree said to itself:
"All my tree comrades have beautiful green leaves, and I have only sharp needles. No one will touch me. If I could have a wish I would ask for leaves of pure gold."
When night came the little tree fell asleep, and, lo! in the morning it woke early and found itself covered with glistening, golden leaves.
"Ah, ah!" said the little tree, "how grand I am! No other tree in the woods is dressed in gold."
But at evening time there came a peddler with a great sack and a long beard. He saw the glitter of the golden leaves. He picked them all and hurried away leaving the little tree cold and bare.

Arbor Day Stories for Kids
www.apples4theteacher.com

Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) Writing Probe

Name: _____ Grade/Classroom _____ Date _____

One day I went out on a boat into the open ocean. I was all alone in the boat. Suddenly a storm blew in and carried me off to a desert island. Then …

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Total Words _____) (# Correctly Spelled Words ___) (# Correct Writing Sequences __)

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) - Mathematics

Single Skill Computation Probe: Student Copy

Student : _____ Date: _____

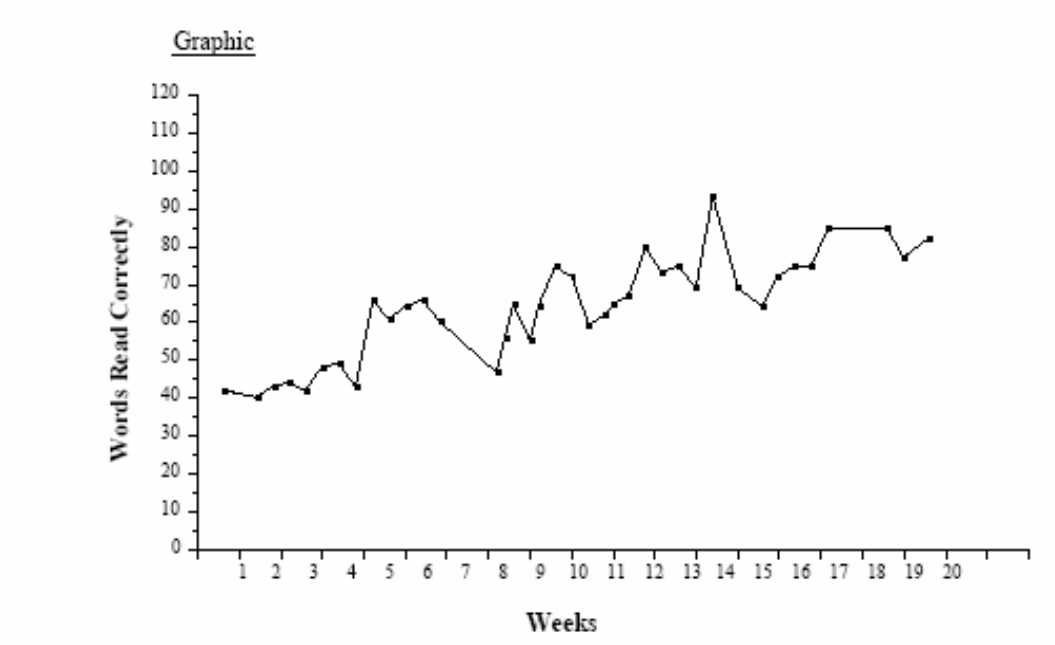
13 **x 14**	**17** **x 93**	**92** **x 47**
33 **x 31**	**41** **x 54**	**72** **x 78**
52 **x 53**	**85** **x 61**	**13** **x 10**

Appendix D

Examples of Data Display Methods

Graphed data is easier to interpret than data displayed in tabular form. These two display methods show the number of words read correctly from randomly selected passages over an 18 week period.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
Mon			44		66			47			62	80				75				
Tues		40		49		66			55	72	65		69	69	72			77		
Wed	42		42		61			56	64			73				85				
Thurs		43		43		60				59	67		93		75					
Fri			48		64			65	75			75		64			85	82		



Adapted from Problem Solving and RtI- Advanced Professional Training Workshop in NASP Convention 2006. W. David Tilley & George M. Batsche

Appendix E

Task Lists and Standards for RtI Tiers

Checklist for Universal Screening:

Task	Tools/Resources	Responsible Individuals	Timeline/Status
Review your screening instrument's items to be certain that content is aligned with the curriculum for each grade level.			
Once a tool has been selected, determine and secure the resources required to implement it.			
Determine initial professional development needs and continuing professional development.			
Administer the screening measuring three times a year (e.g., early fall, mid-term, and late spring).			
Organize the screening results to provide a profile of all students and their comparisons with each other and the appropriate content.			
Monitor results at the classroom level and make decisions about when teachers/instructional programs require more scrutiny and support.			
Add screening results to a database so that students' performance can be monitored over time.			
Specify written steps so that further scrutiny is provided to students judged as at-risk.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

Checklist for TIER 1 - Instruction

Task	Tools/Resources	Responsible Individuals	Timeline/Status
Identify scientifically based instructional programs in reading, writing, and math.			
Select evidence-based curricula interventions and resources to accompany core instructional programs.			
Adopt a system to measure fidelity of implementation.			
Select and implement a schoolwide academic and behavior screening program.			
Identify team and process to manage screening results.			
Establish data-collection system and implement systematic monitoring of student progress (such as curriculum-based measurement).			
Identify team and process to analyze progress monitoring results to determine which students are at risk and require more intense instructional support.			
Develop a program of continuous, rigorous professional development experiences related to scientifically-based curriculum/teaching practices, progress monitoring, implementing practices with fidelity, and data-based decision-making.			
Develop and implement process for collaborating with problem solving team regarding student movement from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and beyond.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

Checklist for TIER 1-Progress Monitoring

Task	Tool(s)/ Resources	Responsible Individual(s)	Timeline/Status
Within the relevant content area, the progress monitoring measure/tool selected for Tier 1 is reviewed to determine whether content of the measure/tool is aligned with the school's curriculum.			
Once a tool has been selected, determine and secure the resources required to implement it (e.g., computers, folders, copies, testing areas).			
Determine the professional development needs and continuing training support.			
Administer the progress monitoring measure frequently enough to assess a learner's responsiveness. At Tier 1, screening is three times/year, with routine monitoring on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.			
Results are monitored at the individual student level and decisions are made about reasonable cut points to determine movement to Tier 2 and beyond.			
Results are monitored at the classroom level, and decisions are made about when teachers/instructional programs require more scrutiny and support.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

Checklist for TIER - 2 and Beyond Interventions

Task	Tools/Resources	Responsible Individual(s)	Timeline/Status
Identify structure/make-up of problem solving team.			
Select resources/curricula/interventions for use with standard protocol approach in reading (decoding and comprehension), strategies, math, writing.			
Create and continue the development of resources on evidence-based instructional strategies to support identified students.			
Schedule time for collaboration for general and special education to observe, implement, and evaluate strategies.			
Implement a system of data collection and progress monitoring for Tier 2 and beyond.			
Provide professional development opportunities for problem solving and protocol approaches.			
Ensure time and process is scheduled for team to meet and review student needs.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

TIER - 2 and Beyond Progress Monitoring

Task	Tools/Resources	Responsible Individual(s)	Timeline/Status
Within the relevant area of focus for the intervention, the progress monitoring measure/tool selected for Tier 2 and beyond is reviewed to determine whether content of the tool is aligned with the intervention.			
Administer the progress monitoring measure frequently enough to assess a learner's responsiveness. At Tier 2, two to five times per month is the research-based recommendation.			
Organize results to provide a profile of the student's progress within this tier. This could be a graph of test scores supplemented with student work samples.			
Results are monitored to determine whether a student is responding to the intervention.			
Decision rules are developed about when to return a student to Tier 1, when to continue with Tier 2 and beyond, and whether further scrutiny of student performance for special education is warranted.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

Checklist for Fidelity of Implementation

Task	Tools/Resources	Responsible Individuals	Timeline/Status
Develop a system of professional development and training as the school begins RtI implementation and as it hires new staff.			
Collect and create methods to ensure fidelity.			
Coordinate master schedules to conduct fidelity checks (i.e., teacher evaluations, walk-through checks, professional development).			
Develop a plan to systematically review results of information collected.			
Develop criteria to indicate when a teacher may require additional supports.			
Develop a plan to provide additional supports/professional development.			

Adapted from: National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2006, *RTI Manual*

Appendix F

Case Studies

RtI – Academic Case Study

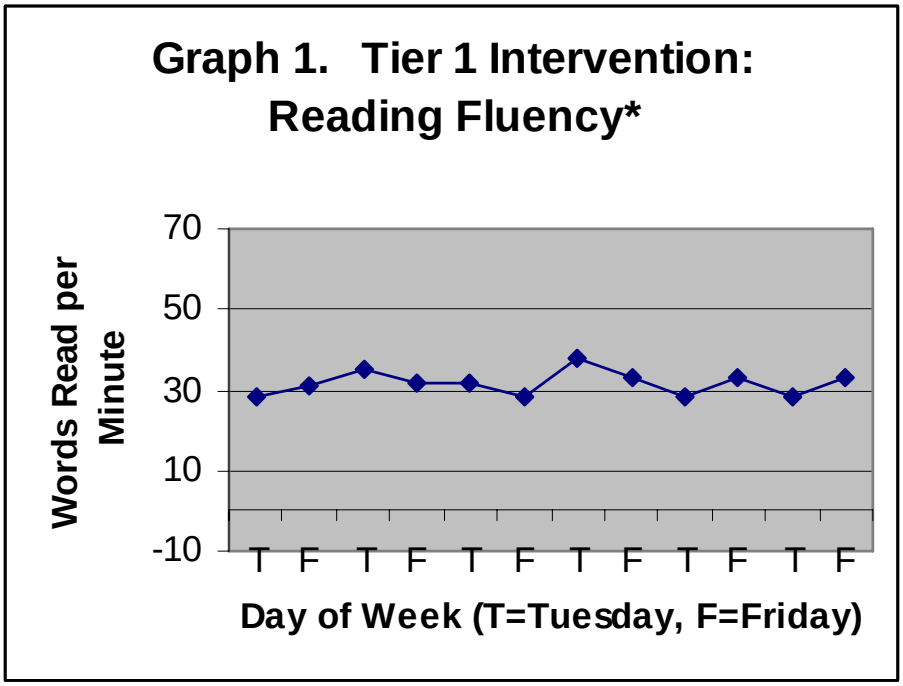
This academic case study was adapted from the text, *Response to Intervention: A Practical Guide for Every Teacher,* by William N. Bender and Cara Shores.

A second grade student at Lincoln Elementary School struggled with reading fluency. While the student seemed proficient at decoding words and it appeared that no specific phonological deficit existed, her fluency was below that of the other children in her grade. The universal screening tool used in the school division was a statewide assessment of fluency and comprehension and reflected that she scored in the bottom quartile. The reading series used in second grade is the *Open Court Reading Series,* which is a scientifically validated direct instructional program.

The school division has an RtI leadership team, and each elementary school has a student progress monitoring team. Due to the student's low performance on the state-wide fluency and comprehension test, the school progress monitoring team discussed an appropriate intervention and closely monitored her progress. As a Tier 1 intervention, the teacher discussed the student's reading challenges with the school's reading specialist. The specialist recommended that the teacher continue using the *Open Court Reading Series* while closely monitoring progress, using a reading running record and tracking the number of words read correctly. Regular classroom instruction was to continue through the next grading period. A curriculum-based assessment on reading fluency would be used to monitor the student's progress twice a week, and the reading specialist would

provide suggestions on how to do that. The number of words read correctly in a two-minute period during short reading sessions would be counted to measure the student's progress.

Twice a week, the teacher scheduled a five-minute reading session with the student so she could read a second-grade reading passage. While the student read, the teacher kept a running record, marking any errors. The number of "words read correctly" were calculated after a two-minute period. In order to compute the number of "words read correctly per minute" that number was divided by two. The teacher discussed each word that was missed with the student and then the passage was reread for a second time for two minutes. The count of "words read correctly" was taken, and a raw score was recorded on a chart indicating the student's oral fluency score for the day. The reading specialist periodically observed the student during a whole-group reading lesson from *Open Court* and during several of the reading fluency curriculum-based measurements delivered by the teacher. The child's progress monitoring is illustrated below.

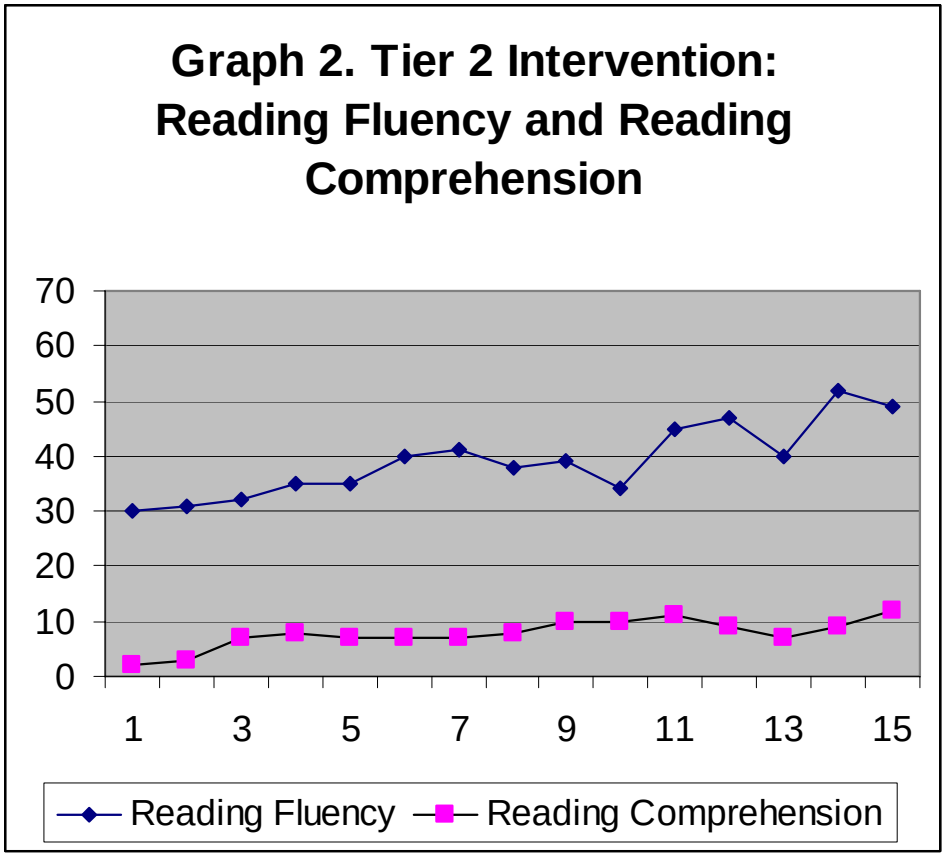


*Bender, N & Shores, C. (2007) *Response to Intervention: A Practical Guide for Every Teacher*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc., p. 35

The data shown in Graph 1 reflects that the student did not make substantial progress during the Tier 1 intervention and only averaged about 30 words read correctly per minute, which is reading at low fluency when compared with peers. The student progress monitoring team at the school determined that the student needed more intensive intervention, and moved her from Tier 1 to Tier 2.

The Tier 2 intervention included a computerized adaptation of the *Read Naturally* curriculum for the next grading period. This particular intervention provided scores on both reading fluency and reading comprehension each day for three weeks. Using a computerized version of the *Read Naturally* curriculum enabled the student to complete the reading class work every day without the teacher's constant direct assistance.

Graph 2 indicates that this specific intervention was successful for the student. During the six-week grading period, her reading fluency increased from 30 words per minute to an average of approximately 45 words per minute. The student was able to boost her reading comprehension from answering three to five questions correctly to nine or ten questions answered correctly. Her fluency and comprehension scores met or exceeded the benchmarks for this time period during the school year. The data indicates that the student needed a more intensive intervention than offered by the *Open Court Reading Series,* which all children in the regular classroom received. She responded positively to Tier 2 intervention that was directly targeted at her specific reading deficit. Her response to the intervention demonstrates that she did not manifest a "learning disability," but that she needed reading instruction that focused on her reading deficits more precisely than the *Open Court Reading Series* did.



*Bender, N & Shores, C. (2007) *Response to Intervention: A Practical Guide for Every Teacher*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc., p. 38

After reviewing her progress, the school student progress monitoring team elected to move the student back to Tier 1 and continue to monitor her progress closely.

RtI Behavioral Case Study

David is a second grade student who has been calling other students names and displaying verbally aggressive behavior since school started. His teacher started keeping a log soon after school started which documented each incident. Included in the log were antecedents of the behavior, the behavior, and the consequences of the behavior. David's teacher spoke to him regarding his antagonistic behavior. She also sent notes home and called David's mother. At the end of a two week period, the name calling and verbally aggressive behavior continued, and the teacher referred David to the principal. At this point, it was obvious that the intervention (sending notes home and calling mother) was not effective and more intensive measures were needed.

Since the principal was now involved with David, she and his teacher discussed Tier 1 interventions that would likely be effective with him. The teacher typically provided positive reinforcement in the form of small treats or pencils for appropriate behavior. The teacher and the principal intensified the reinforcement for David in Tier 1 by implementing a behavioral contract. The contract specified that additional reinforcements for appropriate behavior(s) would be awarded; a short behavioral intervention plan was written. The plan specified that the teacher will have an initial meeting with David to discuss his behavior. At that time the student will learn that for each day he is able to reduce his verbal aggression he will receive fifteen minutes of computer time while waiting for his bus (at the end of the day). The teacher felt like this would be an effective reinforcement for David because he enjoyed and looked forward to computer activities. The student's behavioral plan also stipulated that the teacher would

continue to monitor and record David's behavior and keep a count of his verbal aggression episodes. (See the behavioral log.)

After two weeks of maintaining the behavioral log, David had acted out on seven separate occasions in verbally aggressive ways. As such, the Tier 1 intervention currently in place was not working for him. Even though the intervention did not work for David the teacher noticed that when he acted in verbally aggressive ways by calling other students names, he did it without thinking. It seemed that David was oblivious to his aggressive speech and the way it affected other students. This observation helped the teacher in formulating a Tier 2 intervention.

After the teacher and principal agreed that David needed a Tier 2 intervention, they met with the special education teacher and school student progress monitoring team. Because the teacher was convinced that David was completely unaware of his behavior, the group decided to implement a self-monitoring intervention. Using a self-monitoring system would require that the student count his own acts of verbal aggression while the teacher continued to maintain her behavior log. David would be provided a self-monitoring sheet each morning to track his verbal aggression. If his count and the teacher's count matched at the end of the day, he would be rewarded with 15 minutes of computer time at the end of the school day.

The special education teacher agreed to provide David's classroom teacher with guidelines for teaching David how to self-monitor. Once he had mastered this technique, the teacher did not feel she needed the special education teacher to consult in the classroom on a daily basis. David's behavior was charted over an eight week period, and the reduction in the number of verbally aggressive outbursts over that time demonstrated that this intervention was effective.

Behavior Log		
Name: David		Date: 8/16/06 – 8/25/06
Antecedent	**Behavior**	**Consequence**
None observed: students walked into class at 7:50 am on 8/16/06	D called out to Bobby,"I remember you!" You're a son of a b- - - -!"	I spoke to D immediately and told him in front of everyone that we did not use inappropriate language or call others names in my class.
8//16/06 1:45 pm Class Discussion A student answered a question incorrectly and D got excited while seated at his desk.	D said loudly, "You're an idiot!"	The class giggled a bit, and I told them to be quiet and `then took D into the hallway. I talked to him again about his language, and told him not to do that or I'd have to speak to his mom.
8/18/06 2:45 pm After the final bell as students left the class to head for the bus D was not particularly angry or upset.	D said, "I want to get to my bus first so I don't have to sit beside (he named another student in our class). He stinks!"	I held D in the class until the others had left (I knew his bus was last and wouldn't leave for a few minutes). I talked with him about how others felt when he said things like that. I then warned the bus driver.
8/20/06 9:35 am We were just beginning spelling	D said, "I hate spelling and teachers that make me do it. They are real a—holes!"	I took D to the office for cursing and name calling. I talked to him on the walk up there about how his statement might make me feel. I shared this log with the principal.
8/22/06 7:50 am Beginning of the school day	D came into the classroom angry and upset. He shouted at me, "You didn't have to call my Mom! You turkey!"	I took him back to the principal, and told him on the way that the principal must have called his mom. The principal asked me to call her and request that she come to school for a meeting.
8/24/06 10:45 am A student walked by D's desk and accidentally bumped D while he was writing a math problem.	D said, "You're an a—hole and you better leave me alone."	Students giggled a bit and D looked surprised at that. I "fined" him some free time, since his mom was coming in that afternoon to discuss these problems.
8/25/06 8:10 am Just after class began	D said, "I don't want to be here. You're all a—holes (his favorite term apparently), and you all hate me."	One student told him to "shut-up," before I could intervene. I took D to the office. Note that his mom did not show up for the requested appointment on these behavior problems,
Bender, W.N. & Shores, C. (2007) *Response to Intervention: a Practical Guide for Every Teacher.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc. p. 137		