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# INTRODUCTION

What should teachers do to meet the needs of all the students in their classrooms, including those who seem to be struggling academically or behaviourally? What can we do to help underachievers so that they don't fall behind? How do we handle behaviour problems in a positive and proactive way? What can we do to challenge our brightest students? How do we know when our best classroom strategies are not working? How do we decide when it is appropriate for some students to be referred for special education or other special services? Finally, how do we obtain the data and information necessary to make such decisions in a professional and accurate way?

The answers to these questions revolve around three basic educational ideas — differentiation, achievement and response to intervention (RTI). In this book you will see how these three ideas are interrelated, how they work together, and how we can help all of our students when we implement practical research-based classroom strategies and interventions based on them.

It is important to determine why a specific student is a low achiever in school. What factors are causing poor academic performance? It is equally important to determine if a student is sitting in class learning nothing new while he waits for everyone else to catch up. Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students is one of the basics for 21st-century teachers. The next step, however, is to find out if what we are doing is really working to raise the achievement of an individual student or group of students.

The RTI approach helps us learn what works and what doesn't. Some students need interventions that deal with specific academic skill deficits. Others need motivation or organisational skills or help with appropriate classroom behaviour. Thinking strategies and interventions can aid students who need help in reading, writing, maths and problem solving. Students who have behaviour problems may need strategies in self-discipline and behaviour management.

In this book you will learn about a variety of research-based interventions including both behavioural/classroom management strategies and academic/instructional strategies. You will find out how to link student needs to specific interventions, thereby selecting the right interventions to meet the needs of each student.

Use this book as you collaborate with other teachers. Follow a structured problem solving process to discover the best interventions for specific students. Use multi-disciplinary teams — sometimes called student assistance teams or student support teams — to work together brainstorming specific strategies and interventions for success. In general, it is best to try positive preliminary intervention strategies first. Normally these are good classroom management and differentiation strategies.

Most importantly, this book will help you learn how to assess and monitor individual student progress and how to select and use the *Coil RTI Progress Monitoring Forms™* that best meet your needs and the needs of your students.

## DIFFERENTIATION AND RTI: CONNECTIONS

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*When we see huge disparities in achievement among students of the same age and grade, it is hard to understand what the frequently used phrase 'being on grade level' means. [...] students in every grade fall at different points in an achievement range that starts very high and ends very low; there is nothing "level" about it.*

— Barton & Coley, Educational Leadership, December 2008–January 2009

The above quote shows the need for differentiation in every classroom. The RTI approach points the way to individualised, differentiated instruction for all students along with continuous formative assessment so that we can readily see which strategies work with an individual student and which do not. Differentiation and the RTI approach work hand-in-hand to bring all students to success. Implementing a scientifically-based differentiated curriculum using differentiated instructional strategies is essential for RTI.

Ideas to consider when thinking about connections between RTI and Differentiation:

- Differentiation provides the classroom structure that makes RTI doable.
- Differentiation helps students who learn in different ways; RTI depends on this happening.
- The Interventions (the 'I') in RTI = Differentiation Strategies.
- Differentiation strategies are flexible and are designed to meet individual needs; the RTI problem-solving approach is based on flexible, individual interventions.
- Differentiation and the RTI approach assume that a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum really fits no one.
- RTI and Differentiation both rely on pre-assessment and formative assessment.
- RTI and Differentiation focus on students' progress towards learning goals.
- RTI and Differentiation lead students to understand their own learning preferences.
- Differentiation (originated in Gifted Education) and RTI (originated in Special Education) both focus on students whose needs are different from the average.

## MOTIVATION, ACHIEVEMENT AND RTI: CONNECTIONS

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RTI does not just focus on academic problems. An important element of RTI involves behavioural interventions. In the tiered system of RTI, behavioural interventions can be looked at in this way:

Tier 1 — Schoolwide and classroom behaviour management strategies

Tier 2 — Specific, targeted social behaviour interventions generally in a small group setting

Tier 3 — Intensive and focused on individual behavioural deficits. This may include individual counselling

Some students need help in understanding and complying with the behavioural expectations of the school. Others need to learn to take responsibility for their own actions. The goal of behavioural interventions is for students to exhibit positive behaviours that lead to success and achievement in school. Many students have the academic ability to succeed in school but do not because of their own behaviour.

# CURRICULUM COMPACTING

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## CAROLINE

Caroline is a high achieving student who generally knows most of the skills and knowledge in her year level's maths and reading standards. She is a teacher-pleaser and rarely complains that the work is boring or too easy. However, she has developed the habit of being a rather dependent learner and waits for teacher approval on everything she does in school.

Caroline is an excellent candidate for the Curriculum Compacting strategy. In Curriculum Compacting, a research-based strategy developed by Dr Joseph Renzulli, skills and knowledge that can easily be tested are identified. Mastery level is established by the classroom teacher, and alternate activities are delineated.

The Curriculum Compactor form has three columns:

Column 1: Skill, Knowledge, Benchmark or Standard

Column 2: Documentation of Mastery

Column 3: Alternate Activities

The basic goal of this strategy is to challenge high-ability students rather than having them do the regular classroom work while learning little that is new. Students generally take pre-tests before the beginning of a unit of instruction. If mastery is attained, they work on alternate activities while the rest of the class is learning the skill or knowledge.

This differentiation strategy encourages good organisation and time management skills. It leads students to become more responsible for their own learning. Usually the classroom teacher establishes a time each day to meet with compacting students in order to answer their questions, offer suggestions and give them additional guidance. The classroom teacher, however, is generally not available consistently during the learning process, and some independence in learning is both expected and encouraged.

As you can see from Caroline's Coil RTI Progress Monitoring Forms <sup>TM</sup>, she demonstrated mastery of multiplication of one digit numbers. Because of this, she was able to work on an alternate activity that developed higher-level thinking skills and challenged her to use her knowledge in a new way. Because we monitored her progress, we could readily see that while her basic maths skills are very good, she needs more help in learning to work independently.

On the next page, you can see Caroline's Curriculum Compactor form. A blank Curriculum Compactor form for you to complete with your students is found on page 23.

# COIL RTI PROGRESS MONITORING FORM™

## FEAR OF FAILURE

STUDENT'S NAME: Anthony

TARGETED SKILL, KNOWLEDGE OR BEHAVIOUR

- *Overcoming a fear of failure*

### PRE-ASSESSMENT: (RECORD ALL THAT APPLY)

DATE(S) OF PRE-ASSESSMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

TEST SCORE(S): Refused to take CHECKLIST INDICATOR(S): RTI Behavioural Characteristics 3, 7 & 8 Weaknesses, 4 & 5 Improving

### OBSERVATION(S)

*Unwilling to do work*

*Verbalises "I'll just fail anyway"*

### PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Below Expectation		Exceeds Expectations		
Student considers himself a failure in everything so does not attempt any of the work.	Student recognises that failure can be a way to learn things and that he has both strengths and weaknesses.	Student recognises that persistence and effort will help overcome the fear of failure.	Student consistently attempts to beat his/her "personal best".	Student learns from mistakes, recognises his strengths and weaknesses, and accomplishes both easy and difficult tasks.

### STRATEGIES OR INTERVENTIONS: (DESCRIBE OR LIST BELOW)

Intervention or Strategy	Person Responsible	Timeline
1. <i>Give specific praise for positive actions</i>	<i>Adults who work with Anthony</i>	<i>3 weeks</i>
2. <i>Do "Worst-Case Scenario" activity with whole class to open up discussion on dealing with failure.</i>	<i>Classroom teacher</i>	<i>2 days</i>
3. <i>Use RTI Behavioural Characteristics Checklist again to monitor strengths and weaknesses.</i>	<i>Guidance counsellor</i>	<i>End of week 3</i>