

# Table of Contents

About the Author	vii
Introduction: Getting It Right This Time	1
<b>1 Understanding the Importance of RTI</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Who Is Responsible for a Child's Education?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>What Is RTI?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>What Are the Principles Behind RTI?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Tiered or Pyramid Model</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The Role of Special Education in RTI</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>In Conclusion</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2 Understanding the Impact of Poverty and Culture</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Do Minority and Poor Children</b>	
<b>Really Have Equal Access?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>What Is Poverty?</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Why Are More Minority and Poor Children</b>	
<b>in Special Education?</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>What Is Culture?</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>In Conclusion</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3 Planning for RTI Implementation</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Forming the Team</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Phase One: Research and Review</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Phase Two: Creating an RTI System</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Avoiding Common Pitfalls</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>In Conclusion</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>4 Closing the Gap at Tier 1</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Monitoring the Strength of the Core Curriculum</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Building Relationships First</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Focusing on Vocabulary</b>	<b>78</b>

## What Are the Principles Behind RTI?

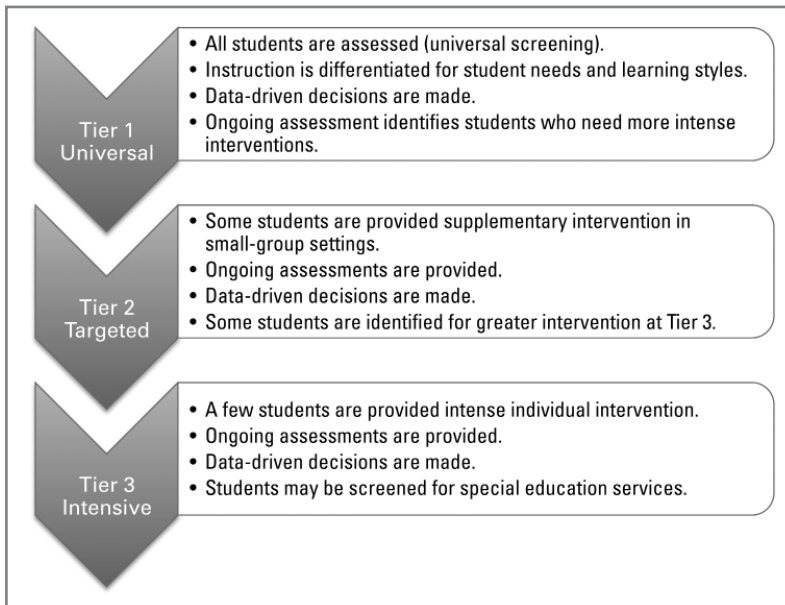
Response to intervention was born of the basic belief that all kids can learn. When correctly implemented, RTI articulates this principle through individualized screening and planning so that every child has access to high-quality instruction and early intervention.

RTI principles include:

- **Prevention-focused approaches**—A scientifically based, differentiated curriculum with various instructional methods is the norm within the school. Learning or behavioral problems are diagnosed before failure occurs.
- **Interventions grounded in research-based instructional strategies**—According to the IDEA Partnership (2007c), research-based instructional strategies, or best practices, are defined as “curriculum and educational interventions that have been proven to be effective for most students based on scientific study.” In RTI, when students struggle and are provided with interventions, those interventions must be proven to be effective by scientific research.
- **Fidelity of implementation**—Fidelity means that an intervention program is implemented according to research findings. In other words, teachers do not merely know the names of the best practices; they have been trained in how to implement them correctly in the classroom. For example, the research of Marzano (2007) shows that cooperative learning has a significant effect on student learning. Many teachers do not use cooperative learning because they say it does not work in their classrooms. But a closer examination of what these teachers implement under the name of cooperative learning often reveals that they are merely grouping. To achieve the effect sizes of the research, a teacher must employ *all* of the processes of cooperative learning, which will be discussed further in this book.

a comprehensive curriculum with quality teaching strategies and materials . . . , 80% will need at least temporary interventions from time to time, 15% will need more intense interventions at the Tier Two level and 5% will be in need of more intense and individual interventions to support learning at Tier Three. (p. 15)

Figure 1.1 describes the three tiers most often used in schools.



**Figure 1.1: The intervention tiers of RTI.**

Bender and Shores continue,

This model presents the basic concept of multitier instruction, in that most needs for most students are successfully addressed in Tier One, whereas Tier Two interventions can alleviate learning problems for most students struggling in basic skills. Tier Three is, in most states, reserved for students with significant remediation needs, and in many cases, students in Tier Three interventions may have already been declared eligible for services for learning disabilities. (p. 4)

## Chapter two

# Understanding the Impact of Poverty and Culture

**V**olumes have been written about closing gaps in achievement, and millions of dollars have been spent trying to find ways to help all students be successful—yet achievement gaps persist for some groups of students. Many schools have implemented their own interpretations of response to intervention in an effort to close those gaps, but even if undertaken with the best intentions, these interpretations will not make the expected difference unless they address two hidden issues: poverty and culture. If RTI is to fulfill its promise—if educators are truly going to assess learning difficulties versus instructional mistakes, and then address those difficulties successfully—then we must direct more attention toward alleviating the effects of poverty and culture.

### **Do Minority and Poor Children Really Have Equal Access?**

The Supreme Court ruled that separate is not equal. And yet, because in many urban areas the more affluent have moved to suburbs, cities often have been left with segregated schools through attrition. Many urban facilities are older and lack the wiring capacity for newer technology. They often have younger,

than expected or has already met the goal, then a determination will need to be made as to whether the student can successfully return to a lower tier or whether the student needs more time at the present tier with a more aggressive goal.

## **Avoiding Common Pitfalls**

In her article on getting started in RTI, Susan Hall (2009c) lists eleven pitfalls that schools often encounter in preparing to implement response to intervention. Following are suggestions to help guide decisions during planning and thus avoid the pitfalls Hall identifies.

### ***Pitfall 1: Underestimating the Magnitude of Change***

Response to intervention involves a change in the way teachers view students, effective teaching, and assessment. This type of change requires studying research and talking to others who are implementing RTI within the school or district. It involves taking a hard look at curriculum, including how and when various topics are taught, and correctly monitoring instructional failures. Planning incorporates effective, ongoing staff development. It means truly examining every child for strengths and weaknesses, and then using proven instructional practices that take into account the culture of the students: how they learn and whether learning problems arise from nonacademic issues, such as a poverty environment or compromised health.

### ***Pitfall 2: Taking on Too Many Grade Levels, Tiers, or Buildings in the First Year***

Most types of change require time. Educators should be realistic about the time and personnel RTI will take. Schools that jump in without careful analysis of problems in the current program and how to make changes may simply replicate those problems in a new program. Based on her research with schools that have implemented RTI, Susan Hall (2009c) suggests that schools start