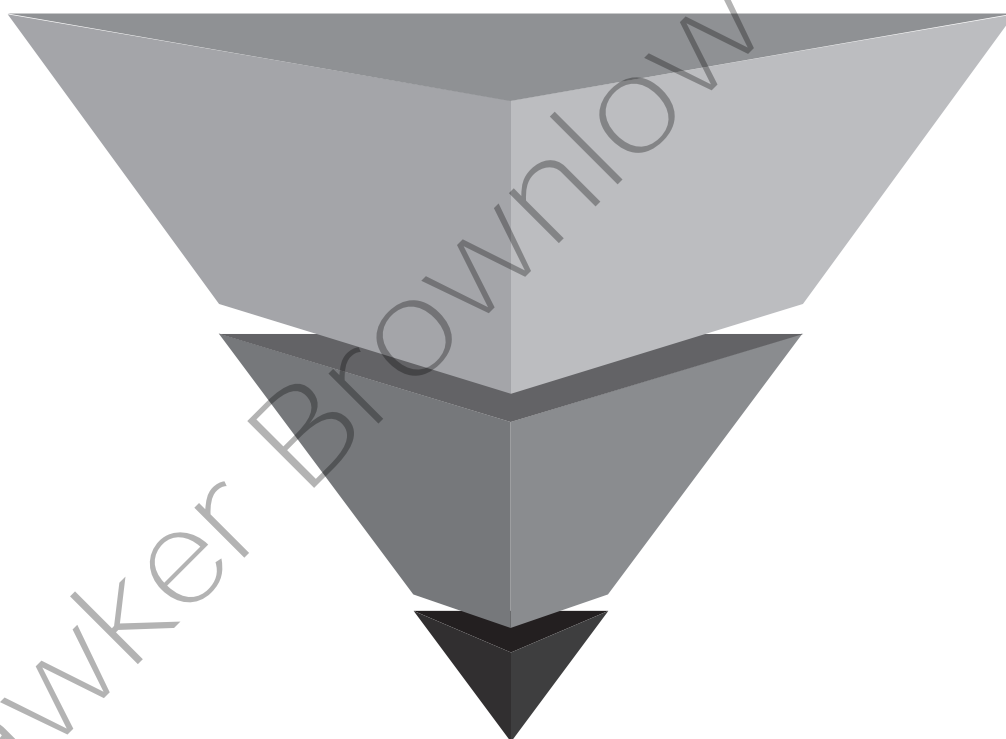


# BEHAVIOR SOLUTIONS

Teaching Academic and Social Skills  
Through RTI at Work™



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**Hawker Brownlow**  
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*Reproducible pages are in italics.*

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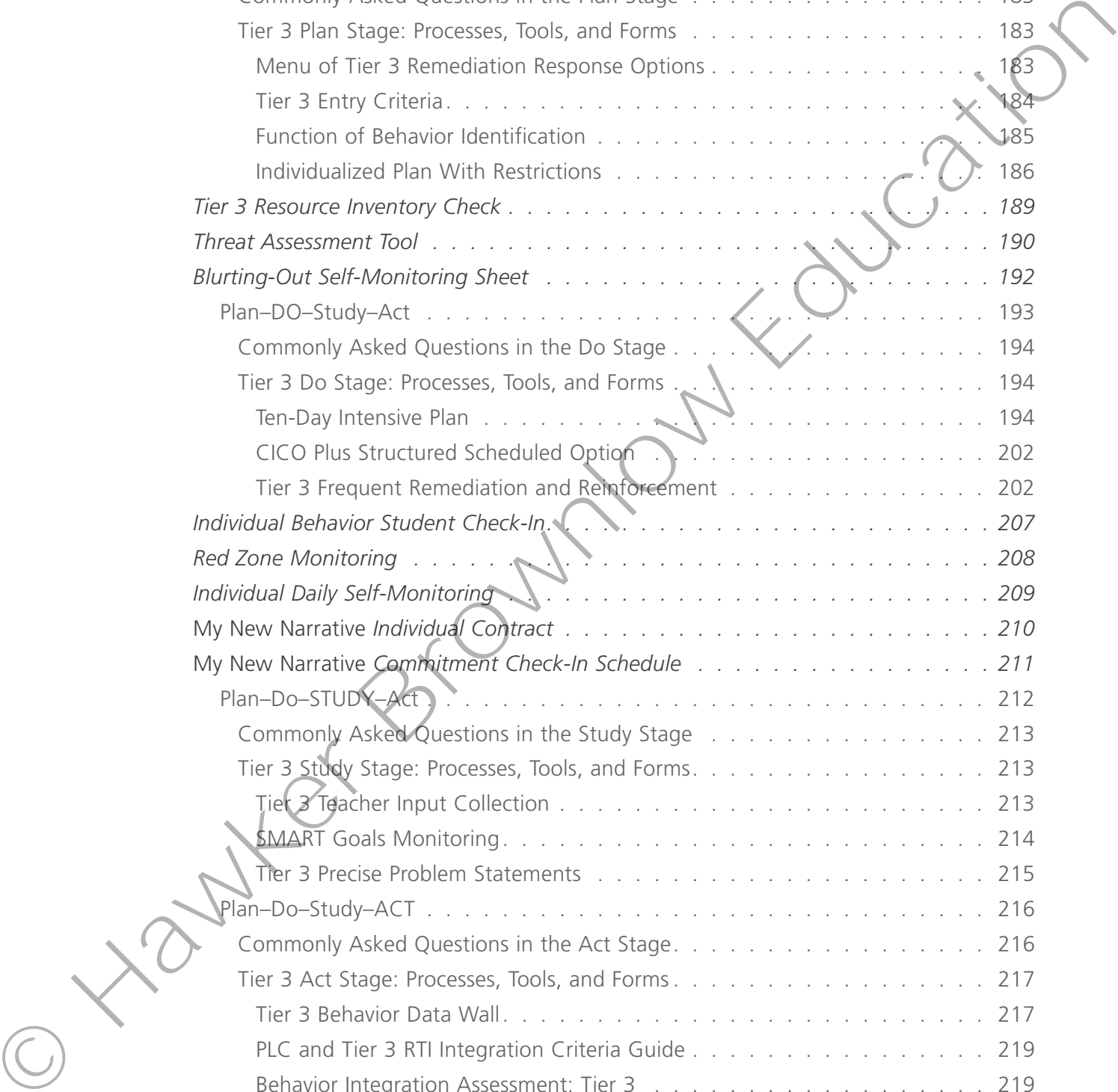
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# Introduction

If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.

—Abraham Maslow

When working with educators, we often hear them voice the same kinds of concerns.

“We weren’t taught how to respond to behavior challenges that go beyond common disruptions.”

“We don’t use behavior data to make decisions about students.”

“We have neither the time nor the resources to address students’ academic and social behavior needs during our grade-level team meetings.”

“We don’t know how to respond to Tier 2 and Tier 3 behaviors.”

“We don’t know what to do if students don’t meet their academic and social behavior goals.”

“What about the other students in my class who don’t get to learn because of the disruptions from a few?”

“Are you expecting teacher teams to discuss behavior?”

“We don’t have time to teach behavior; their parents need to teach them that.”

“Our job is to teach our content, not behavior.”

“We don’t know how to write specific, measurable goals for behavior.”

“What are behavior data, and how do we use it?”





Do any of these comments resonate with you? These concerns make sense. Most educator preparation programs teach potential educators classroom management skills—how to plan behavior expectations within their individual classroom and how to manage minor misbehaviors in class. Rarely are educators taught how to collaboratively teach essential behaviors across the entire school and then systematically and collectively respond when some students require additional time and support mastering these behaviors. Comments like these demonstrate the need to build the capacity of an entire staff—collaborative teacher teams, administrators, and support staff—to collectively address every student’s academic and social behavior needs. Furthermore, they need a mechanism that connects the communication and implementation of tiered levels of behavior supports—for all students—in a coordinated and collaborative fashion.

*Behavior Solutions: Teaching Academic and Social Skills Through RTI at Work™* helps educators meet these needs in their schools and districts. This book details how ensuring that all students master the academic and social behaviors required for their success becomes possible when schools function as professional learning communities (PLCs) and effectively apply response to intervention (RTI) practices. The PLC at Work® process (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) provides the collaborative foundation, and the RTI at Work™ process (Buffum, Mattos, & Malone, 2018) provides a three-tiered system of student support. With guidance from *Behavior Solutions*, different teams—of district and school leaders, site interventionists, and teachers—work together to address students’ behavior needs. To do this effectively requires schoolwide structures and processes that are collaborative, research based, practical, intentional, and grounded in targeted behavior data.

To this end, this book is designed to do the following.

- ▶ Serve as a companion to *Taking Action: A Handbook for RTI at Work* (Buffum et al., 2018), delving much deeper into the specific actions necessary to successfully identify, teach, and intervene on essential academic and social behaviors.
- ▶ Show that successful learning for all requires a school to function as a PLC and simultaneously apply RTI.
- ▶ Help schools implement the provided essential academic and social behavior standards, processes, tools, and resources to function as a PLC for each tier of support—prevention, intervention, and remediation.
- ▶ Provide a process that is inclusive to any behavior initiatives schools are already implementing and help schools systemically align PLC at Work and RTI at Work to any pre-existing behavior initiative (or combination of behavior initiatives) they are currently implementing in their school or district, whether it is positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning (SEL), restorative justice (RJ), culturally responsive teaching (CRT), trauma-informed practices (TIPs), or character education.
- ▶ Show how functioning as a PLC and assigning RTI for behavior based on data addresses what we refer to as the *systemic behavior gap* (page 21).

This introduction touches on why and how the RTI at Work approach is necessary and what this approach looks like, functioning as a primer to the rest of the book's full exploration of these subjects and your assessing their current reality in chapter 1.

## Why RTI at Work Is Necessary

An increasing number of students need social-emotional support to access their education, and responding to student misbehavior is time consuming, takes away from precious instructional time, and negatively impacts teacher efficacy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Mojtabai, Olfson, & Han, 2016; National Institutes of Mental Health, 2018; Visser et al., 2014). Unmet social-emotional needs often show up as negative behavior. All students must learn about academic and social behaviors as a matter of course; they are the only way to best access an education. If a student's behaviors prevent learning—he or she disrupts class with angry outbursts, cannot keep track of materials, or overwhelmingly interacts poorly with peers—responding with supplemental or intensive behavioral support becomes necessary.

Many schools and educators struggle to effectively meet academic and social behavior needs. These behaviors are actions students take in the academic and social parts of their lives, and both skill sets contribute to school success. Specifically, educators struggle to effectively identify, align, teach, reinforce, use data to monitor, and intervene on academic and social behavior standards. Traditional disciplinary responses have been highly ineffective and inequitably applied. The difficulty of implementing a tiered system of research- and evidence-based behavioral best practices grows with the increasing demands from federal and state or provincial accountability measures, district-level initiatives, mandates, missions, and goals. You can use any research-based behavior initiative you currently implement to teach the academic and social behavior standards identified in this book. More importantly, the process we will introduce can be applied universally across any behavior initiatives.

## How RTI at Work Applies to Academic and Social Behaviors

How can educators ensure students learn, master, and *generalize* (apply across multiple settings and situations) a set of academic and social behavior standards that will allow them to access their education and become productive citizens? How do educators design a system that intentionally teaches essential academic and social behavior standards the way it teaches academic content standards? To begin, educators need the tools and practical resources to build, teach, assess, and sustain a foundation for schoolwide behavior expectations at Tier 1 of RTI. This is obviously easier said than done.

On the academic content side, educators receive a set of academic standards for each grade level that students are expected to learn and master. In fact, students, teachers, and administrators are held accountable for these identified academic standards at the federal, state or provincial, and district levels, which requires the alignment of a strong instructional system.