

Introduction to Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a system for educational redesign based on a hierarchy of interventions that are implemented to meet the needs of students who demonstrate underachievement in core academic areas of literacy and maths. This system is usually represented graphically by a pyramid showing three levels or tiers of intervention.



Overview of This Book

Key Points to Remember

- Old systems were established on old beliefs that no longer work.
- Legislative labels are barriers to student achievement.
- A crisis in public education requires different skills and instructional redesign.
- US legislation, The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), create a contiguous system for achievement.
- Discrepancy formulas and bell-shaped curves inhibit early interventions for students in need.

This book provides concrete guidelines for establishing RTI at the regional, school and classroom levels. The keys to developing a high-quality RTI system in an educational setting rest on using continuous quality improvement (CQI) management tools within professional learning communities (PLCs) to address the needs of *all* learners. This book provides a practical model for teachers, principals, administrators and parent advocacy groups, with clear examples of how to:

- Develop stakeholder support for educational redesign.
- Establish leadership at the regional and school levels.
- Establish a school-based RTI Problem-Solving Team.
- Apply research-based practices.
- Garner parent involvement.
- Use data to monitor progress.
- Implement models of intervention.
- Implement the RTI model systemically and systematically. (We use *systemic* to mean the embedded policies, procedures, practices and beliefs found vertically and horizontally within the organisation.

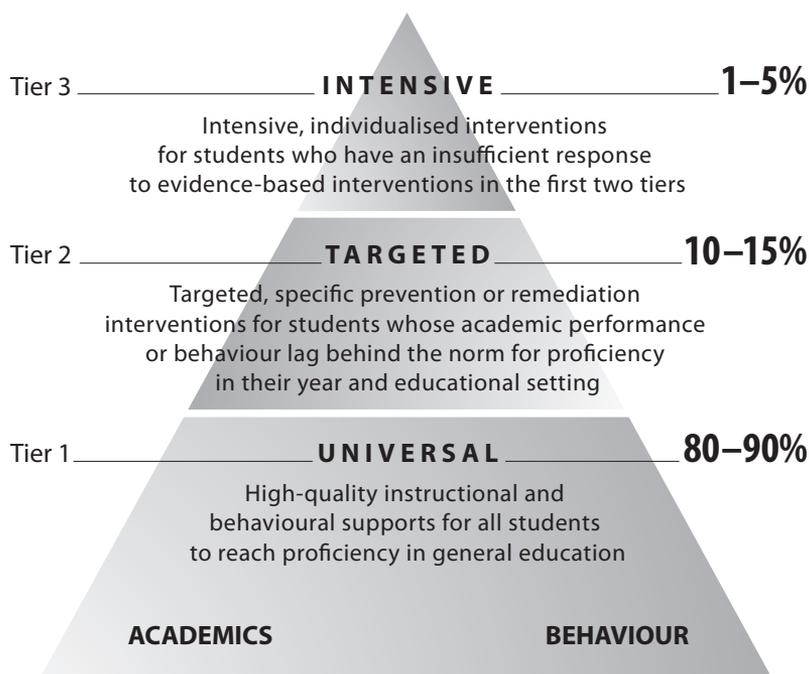


Figure 1-1. RTI Multi-tiered Intervention Model

Students who struggle in Tier 1—students who are not growing at a pace equal to peers, or at the rate to reach proficiency—are provided additional differentiated instruction, smaller groups, and other best-practice interventions within the regular classroom setting while continuing to move with other classmates towards proficiency at a rate commensurate with school-wide success. Instruction and interventions can be provided by the classroom teacher or may be delivered by a team of interventionists already available at the school. These individuals are trained in specific skills in reading, writing, maths, English-language learning and behaviour development. In some schools, these individuals are also general educators, special educators, professional tutors and volunteers. These efforts are designated as Tier 2 or the targeted tier, the middle section of the RTI triangle, which serves approximately 10–15% of all students. Instruction in Tier 2 is delivered with greater frequency, intensity and duration *in the areas of deficit* than those in Tier 1.

For students who continue to demonstrate lagging performance in Tier 2, the third tier at the top of the triangle provides the most intensive interventions. Tier 3 serves about 5% of all students. Instruction is highly specific, addressing the root causes of poor performance, and is provided with increased

Step 8: Review and Establish Systemic Prevention

Root cause analysis findings from Fred and other students are evaluated on a regular basis. Trends and commonalities are used to improve class, year-level and school programs to ensure that all students reach proficiency in every subject, at or above year level.

In contrast to a negative sentinel event, this root cause analysis process may be used for positive sentinel events. In a large urban school, for example, a year three classroom of students from lower income backgrounds was the only classroom scoring 100% proficient on reading in high-stakes annual testing. What happened, and what was different? What would school and regional leadership need to learn about this event that could have implications for other, lower achieving classes? Was the difference in instruction, curriculum, background or behaviour?

Figure 3-2 provides an example of how a PST might identify and analyse four potential environments—instruction, curriculum, background and behaviour—contributing to low literacy achievement. Instruction is identified as the root cause, thus the solution targets that issue first.

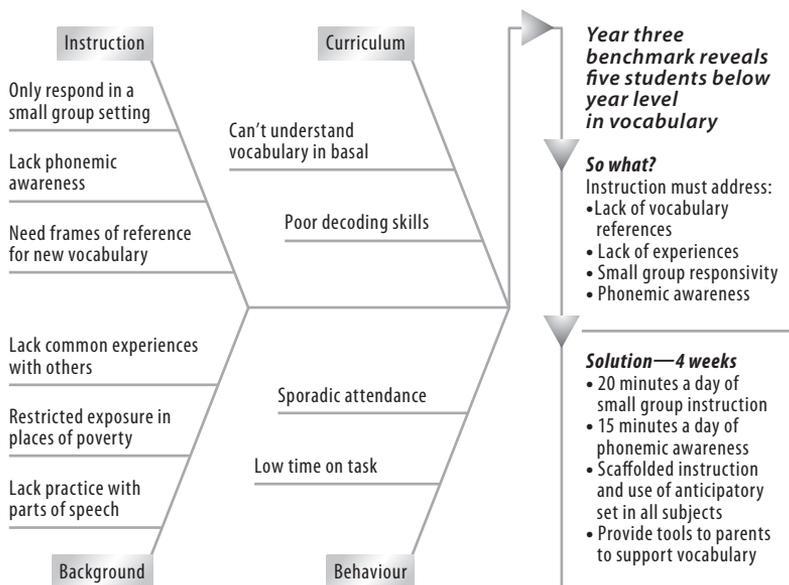


Figure 3-2. Root Cause Analysis

teristics and features of strategies and interventions supported in the school and region. Remember, *it is much better to have a short menu of strategies and interventions that can be supported well and implemented correctly than a long menu of options implemented without fidelity.*

Professional development and student behaviour should not be overlooked.

Behaviour in the Pyramid of Intervention

Response to Intervention, as an educational movement, has taken the position that behaviour is equally important to the learning process as instruction is to academic learning. There is ample evidence that effective classroom and school management support high academic performance in students. All too often, low-performing schools demonstrate problems with student citizenship as evidenced by high percentages of non-attendance, office referrals, suspensions, expulsions and dropouts. Unfortunately, these data also support the notion that those issues are more common in schools with high percentages of minority and low-income students (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). Schools functioning as professional learning communities have tackled this problem by reshaping the behaviour and belief systems of the school staff.

Professional learning communities create collaborative teams where teachers and other staff members learn by sharing professional practices. They engage in conversation and deliberate about learning issues, including safe learning environments, thereby discovering original ways to resolve instructional and behavioural issues.

Data demonstrate that when schools adopt systematic and systemic Positive Behavior Support (PBS) systems and strong instructional strategies, untoward behaviours decline significantly (Sugai & Horner, 2005). PBS, a system of operationally defined and valued outcomes, behavioural and biomedical science, research-validated practices, and systems change has become an international movement and is recognised as a scientifically based tiered intervention system, perfectly aligned to RTI (National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, 2008). For schools and regions interested in this program, PBS information is available at www.pbis.org.