Leanne Prior August 2016

Hold the line – great organisations "maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and, at the same time have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts about your current reality, whatever they may be" [3]

Underlying premise of RTI – Don't "Wait to Fail" but instead provide timely, targeted, systematic interventions to ALL students who demonstrate the need as soon as they demonstrate need. [4] The purpose for RTI is to ensure high levels of learning for every child, and our actions must be guided by that purpose. [5]

It is virtually impossible for a single teacher to possess all the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the unique needs of every child in the classroom.

RTI engages staff in a collective process to provide every child with the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels[6]
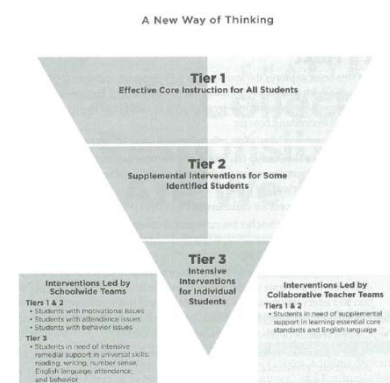
When a child struggles, rather than assume there is something wrong with the child, we first assume that we are not teaching the child correctly. Instead turn inward to ask "How we can find better ways to meet the child's specific learning needs?"[7]

RTI purpose:

- Ensure high levels of learning for every child
- Targeted instruction + Time = Learning
- Systematically provide every child with the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels

Four Principles of RTI[8]:

1. **Collective responsibility** – primary responsibility of each member of the organisation is to ensure high levels of learning for every child. *WHY ARE WE HERE?*
2. **Concentrated Instruction** – systematic process of identifying essential knowledge and skills that all children must master to learn at high levels and determining specific learning needs for each child to get there. *WHERE ARE WE NOW?*
3. **Convergent assessment** – ongoing process of collectively analysing targeted evidence to determine the specific learning needs of each child and the effectiveness of the instruction the child received in meeting these. *WHERE ARE WE NOW?*
4. **Certain access** – systematic processes that guarantees every student will receive the time and support needed to learn at high levels. *HOW DO WE GET EVERY CHILD THERE?*

A New Way of Thinking

Tier 1
Effective Core Instruction for All Students

Tier 2
Supplemental Interventions for Some Identified Students

Tier 3
Intensive Interventions for Individual Students

Interventions Led by Schoolwide Teams
Tiers 1 & 2
• Students with motivational issues
• Students with attendance issues
• Students with behavior issues
Tier 3
• Students in need of intensive remedial support in universal skills: reading, writing, number sense, English language, attendance, and behavior

Interventions Led by Collaborative Teacher Teams
Tiers 1 & 2
• Students in need of supplemental support in learning essential core standards and English language

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[1] Buffam A, Mattos M & Weber C Simplifying the response to Intervention USA Solution Tree Press 2012

[2] Effect Size 1.07 Hattie J Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analysis relating to student achievement New York Routledge

[3] 3 Collins 2005 cited in Buffam A Mattos M Weber C 2012 Simplifying the response to Intervention Solution Tree Press USA p 14

[4] Ibid p2

[5] Ibid p 6

[6] Ibid p1

[7] Ibid p5

[8] Ibid p9

<u>**COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY – WHY ARE WE HERE?**</u>[9]

PLC – focus on learning – schools exist for students to learn not so that teachers have a place to teach!

- High levels of learning for every child – this is the reason the organisation exists and the fundamental responsibility of those who work within it[10]
- This collective purpose sets direction and serves as a compass to guide actions

Two assumptions:

- Educators accept responsibility to ensure high levels of learning for every child
- All students can learn at high levels

Until we are willing to examine and acknowledge that our traditional assumptions and beliefs about our work are outdated and detrimental to the challenge we face today, we will never get better results for students. We have to be honest about our school - are we here to *teach* or are we here to ensure that our students *learn*?

Leading Cultural change:

- *Build an Effective School Leadership Team* – include admin, reps from each Collaborative teacher Team – to learn togther, assess school's current reality, determine potential, next steps to improve the school, identify obstacles and points of leverage and plans best way to create staff concensus and ownership
- *Learn together* - collective inquiry into best practice and current reality
- *Provide the Why before the What* – state why the change is necessary – connect the data to individual children
- *Create a do-able plan* – define responsibilities and resources
- *Expect the best* – the staff is your class
- *Confront the worst* – take a stand on reluctant staff
- *Start* – after consensus has been reached

<u>**Building Structures for Collaboration**[11]</u>**:**

1. **Collaborative Teacher Teams (CTT): to improve student learning as a collective responsibility**[12]

Responsibilities:

- Clearly define essential student learning outcomes
- Provide effective Tier 1 core instruction
- Assess student learning and effectiveness of instruction
- Take primary responsibility for Tier 2 supplemental interventions for students who have failed to master the team's identified essential standards

They are responsible for taking the lead in ensuring every child learns the essential standards of their year level. They are highly trained and credentialed, know content best, have assessment data to identify children who have/haven't reached mastery and know their students best.

Teacher teams must establish essential standards for student achievement and then design paths of instruction to enable all learners – this is of fundamental importance in the success of all students[13]

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[9] Ibid Chapter 2
[10] Ibid p15
[11] Ibid Chapter 3
[12] Ibid p33

These are grade year level teams and NIT teams (these focussed on skills not subject specific content).

2. **School wide team - School Wide Leadership Team (SWLT)[14]:**

Are the *guiding coalition* comprising of reps from each Collaborative teaching team, Site leader and support staff , who meet frequently (every other week) to unit and co-ordinate school's efforts across year levels by:

- *Building consensus* for the school's mission of collective responsibility
- Create a *master schedule* that provides sufficient time for team collaboration, core instruction, supplemental interventions and intensive interventions
- Co-*ordinate school wide human resources* to best support core instruction and intervention
- Allocate school resources to best support core instruction and interventions
- Assist with articulating *essential learning outcomes* across grade levels
- Lead schools *universal screening* efforts to identify students in need of Tier 3 intensive interventions before they fail
- Lead the school's efforts at *Tier 1* for school wide behaviour expectations including attendance policies
- Ensure all students have *access* to grade level instruction
- Ensure resources available for *Tier 2 and 3* interventions
- *Continually monitor school wide evidence* of student learning

3. **School wide team -School Intervention Team (SWIT)[15]:**

Comprises Principal, Counsellor, Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Special Education teacher, EALD teacher, Reading Specialist and Librarian who meet weekly (preferred) or fortnightly (meeting dates are set at beginning of school year); Leads school's micro view on specific students in need of Tier 3 support; focus their attention on the individual needs of a school's most at risk students by:

- Determining the *specific learning needs* of each student in need of intensive support
- Diagnose the cause of the student's struggles at *Tier 1 and 2*
- Determine the *most appropriate interventions* to address student needs
- Frequently *monitor the student's progress* to see if interventions are achieving the desired outcomes
- *Revise the student's interventions* when they are not achieving the desired outcomes
- Determine when *special education identification* is appropriate

Ensuring team effectiveness:

- Make time for collaboration – make it the highest priority, schedule it in and work everything else around it
- Set team norms or collective commitments
- Use simple effective forms to guide their work (forms that are communication tools that help intervention happen more quickly and effectively - help drive the process, ensure consistency, provide space for specific data entry, use check boxes where possible, invite contributions from parents and students, explicitly detail what, when, who)

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[13] Tomlinson & McTighe 2006 *Integrating differentiated instruction and Understanding by Design* cited in Ibid p 96
[14] Ibid p36
[15] Ibid p37

Closing statement:

Collective responsibility focuses a school's collective efforts on one purpose: student learning. It creates the culture and collaborative structures necessary for RTI to work.

Resources:

Team Foundations template- go.solution-tree.com.rti

CONCENTRATED INSTRUCTION – WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO?[16]

A systematic process of identifying essential knowledge and skills that ALL students must master to learn at high levels and determining the specific learning needs for each child to get there.

One of Hattie's[17] 6 signposts for excellence in education, is "Teachers needs to know the learning intentions and success criteria, know how well they are attaining these criteria and where to go next: Where are we going? How are you going? Where to next?"

A Focus on Learning - *"When everything is important, nothing is"*

Teachers must be given the time and training to clarify exactly what every student must master.

- What do we want our students to learn?
- How will we know if each student is learning each of the skills, concepts, knowledge and dispositions we have deemed essential?
- How will we respond when some of our students don't learn?
- How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient? [18]

Identifying essential skills and knowledge:

- *Endurance*: Will this standard provide students with knowledge and skills that are valuable beyond a single test date?
- *Leverage* – Will it provide knowledge and skills that are valuable in multiple disciplines
- *Readiness* – Will it provide students with knowledge, skills essential for success in the next level of instruction?

Prioritise the standards:

1. Teachers reach consensus on importance of each standard and pacing of instruction (this process creates ownership
2. Re word the standard in teacher friendly and student friendly language
3. Teams agree what students will be able to do as a result of mastering this standard – set learning targets
4. Identify prior knowledge and skills necessary for students to learn the standard at proficient level
5. Agree on pacing and common assessment (formative assessment that generates feedback to improve or accelerate student learning
6. Plan enrichment for students who have mastered the standard – make more rigorous the contemn process/activities, culminating product [19]
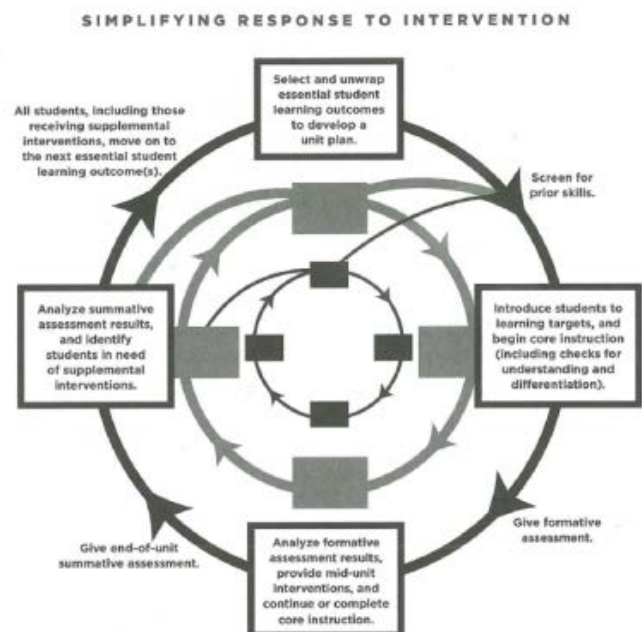

SIMPLIFYING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Figure 4.8: The team teaching–assessing cycle, including Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

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[16] Ibid Chapter 4

[17] Hattie 2009 p239 cited in Ibid p45

[18] DuFours cited in Ibid p 48

7. Teacher teams develop a general plan for remediation, intervention and enrichment

Protocol for Getting started:

1. Complete Essential Standards Chart

2. Team identifies how and when for remediation and enrichment

3. Unwrap 2-3 essential standards into learning targets (LT)

4. Build common formative assessment (3-5 questions for each LT)

5. Use results from common assessments to target students needing more time and support with specific targets

6. Repeat

Students should never miss Tier 1 core instruction in order to receive additional time and support.

Don't wait for children to fail – assess pre-requisite skills and give additional time BEFORE or AS a unit begins

Shoring Up the Core:

80% students receiving well-instructed, research-based curriculum should experience success as a result of initial core instruction therefore schools should place the majority of their efforts strengthening the core instructional programs[20]. We need to develop fidelity to learning and essential standards.

Unit planning should be informed by:

- Standards based resources
- Student data on strengths and needs – Ask in your collaborative teacher teams to define with certainty: "Where are they now? Where are they going? Where to next?"

Concentrated instruction and behaviour

Effective RTI models apply the same 4 guiding principles, use same tiered system of supports and answer the same critical questions for behaviour and academics.

Schools that commit to initiating and sustaining a system of behaviour supports will experience increased student learning[21] - the 80% rule applies here too.

Ensuring timely, systematic, successful and certain access to behaviour supports falls to SWLT or schools can create a special school wide behaviour team to take the lead responsibility. The team ensures all staff accept collective responsibility for the success of all students and concentrates instruction on behavioural expectations.

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[19] Tomlinson CA cited in Ibid p 54

[20] Ibid p 61

[21] Sugai and Horner 2002 cited in Ibid p64)

The team guides convergent assessments that help identify and respond to behavioural needs of groups and individuals

2 categories for behaviour:

- *Academic misbehaviours* eg not paying attention, not completing assignments, missing class, poor study habits etc; often these are signs of lack of motivation, lack of knowledge of the rules of school, or attendance problems.
- *Social misbehaviours*- eg acting out, using inappropriate language or engaging in physical confrontations (often aimed at getting attention).

We must proactively prepare and equip all students to success in all aspects of schooling, by fully and explicitly explaining our expectations of behaviour that will contribute to the climate for high levels of learning

Academic misbehaviours:

To be successful students must be authentically engaged in their learning and intrinsically motivated.

Schools need to foster environments where children self-regulate and engage with their own learning.

Quality concentrated explicit instruction is needed to help children develop self-regulations skills[22]. These include:

- Time management
- Organisation
- Note taking
- Goal setting
- Self motivation

These strategies have rarely been explicitly taught in schools. Remember the best intervention is prevention! To provide concentrated instruction on academic behaviours to improve engagement, motivation and student's use of self-regulatory strategies, schools should do the following:

- Explicitly teach and reinforce self-regulatory strategies
- Assign high quality tasks for students to complete
- Praise and encourage effort to support a growth mindset
- Emphasize the importance of regular attendance
- Build positive relationships between adults and student

Social misbehaviours

Need a systematic school wide system of behavioural supports (eg Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support – PBIS)

To provide Tier 1 instruction, requires collective responsibility and commitment to explicit, consistent modelling and reinforcement of agreed upon expectations. School Leadership team should take the following actions:

- Clearly define behaviour as a responsibility of the school wide team
- Identify expectations and desired behaviours

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[22] Ibid p 66

- Teach desired behaviours in the same manner as academic skills- this should be widely publicizes, displayed and explained
- Consensus must be reached on the fundamental expectations for student behaviour in classrooms. Each classroom should display prompts, reminders and the matrix of behaviour expectations.

Closing statement:

A systematic process of identifying essential knowledge and skills that all students must master to learn at high levels, and determining the specific learning needs for each child to get there is fundamental to knowing where we need to go.

Resources:

Essential Standards Chart, Teaching Cycle Planning Calendar, Sample Behaviour Expectations matrix - go.solution-tree.com.rti

CONVERGENT ASSESSMENT – WHERE ARE WE NOW?[23]

Once a school has created a collaborative culture focussed on collective responsibility for student learning and identified the learning goals all children must reach to be successful in school and life, it should then gather the evidence, through convergent assessment necessary to determine where each child is in his/her learning relative to that goals.

Convergent assessment ensures that interventions and enrichments are timely, systematic and targeted.
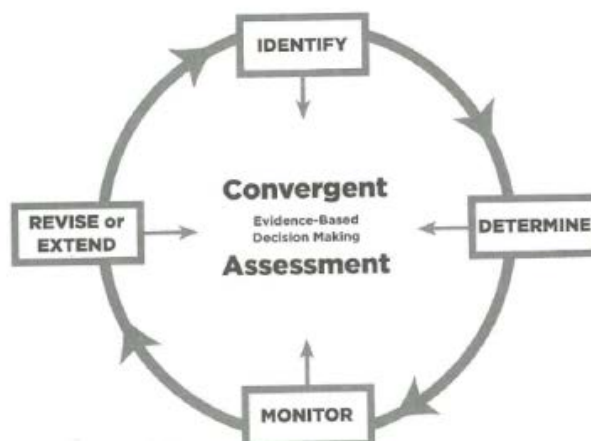
Identifying students through universal screening (eg: PASM, PAT M, PAT R, Westwood):

- The best intervention is prevention – determine the pre requisite skills and knowledge for children to be successful BEFORE instruction
- Ideally universal screening at the beginning of the year and multiple times throughout the year (this expectation can be overwhelming[24])
- Suggest starting universal screening process with reasonable focussed baby steps!
- Purpose is to identify, as early in the school year as possible, those students who, without intensive Tier 3 intervention, are at risk of failing
- Is a quick surveying process intended to identify students in most need of assistance; more time intensive diagnostic assessment are delivered then to necessary students only
- Should use the most effective, proven assessment and intervention tools available
- Responsibility of the School wide Leadership team – in reading, writing, number sense and English-language development as well as students for whom attendance and behaviour has been a problem in the past
- Collaborative teacher teams create their own tools to screen for skills, knowledge and vocabulary identified as prerequisites to achieving mastery of the essential standards

Reading:

Is the single most important skill a child must acquire – most accurate indicator of whether child will drop out of high school, live in poverty, be incarcerated or die prematurely[25]. It is estimated that up to 80% of students "identified as having specific learning disability do not have a disability at all – they simply never mastered the ability to read"[26].

Start each year with universal screening that takes ever child's 'reading temperature' and identified those in need off additional support; additional diagnostic assessments may then be used to determine each child's specific reading needs.

Writing:

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[23] Ibid Chapter 5
[24] Ibid p 87
[25] Rouse, 2005; Ysseldyke, Algozzine & thurlow, 1992 cited in Ibid p80
[26] Baird 2008 cited in Ibid p80

Goal is to ascertain who is significantly below grade level.

Administer a short writing prompt (eg 30 min timed writing) – with the results analysed quickly and holistically; this information is used to provide these struggling writers with immediate intensive Tier 3 writing support.

Number sense:

Can greatly influence a child's success across many subject.

English Language Development (EALD)

Collaborative teacher team screening

- Quick and targeted pre assessment for all students before beginning instruction to determine if they have the prerequisite knowledge and skills for the upcoming unit, aligned to their essential standards.

Select a screening method and clarify responsibilities

- What? When? Where? How?

Interpret the data

Universal screening can help monitor the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction – if there are a significant number of students who are not reaching mastery then we need to consider the instruction.

If schools wish to use previous year's data it is strongly recommended that they follow up by monitoring identified students during the first 4-6 weeks of intervention to confirm their need for such a placement. [27]

Determining   student   needs
After identifying the students in immediate needs of additional time and support, the school must determine the specific needs of each child and then match these needs to appropriate instruction and interventions:

- Further diagnostic assessment may/may not be needed in order to more accurately determine the cause of each student's struggles
- This should be combined with observational data from the collaborative team to determine how best to meet the needs of each student at risk – the SWIT and the CTT both have a role to play in determining how best to provide additional time and support to identified students
- A plan needs to be formulated collaboratively by the team and is based on the collective responsibility for all students
- The following questions should be posed at the beginning of instruction:
  - What structures/schedules currently exist that might support our plans for remediation, Intervention and extension
  - What resources exist that we might be able to use to support these efforts?
  - Which members of our team will work with which group of students and why?

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[27] Ibid p 85

- o What have we been doing successfully that we could build on?
- o What evidence will we collect to help guide our answers to these questions?

Some children will need help with prior skills, some will need additional time and support and some will master the content– this realigns our team thinking on the learning rather than on the teaching.

Monitoring student progress

Three main strategies:

1. Formative assessments

2. Common Formative Assessment (CFA)

3. Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)

After a school has identified student in need of extra help and determined the correct intervention to meet the child needs, the school must monitor each child's progress. Remember that at the foundation of RTI is a belief that as educators, we will make instruction decisions for students based on how they respond to our efforts. If an intervention is working, it confirms that the child's diagnosis is correct and the child is on track. But if the child is not responding to our interventions, then it means that either the diagnosis is incorrect or we have selected the wrong approach.
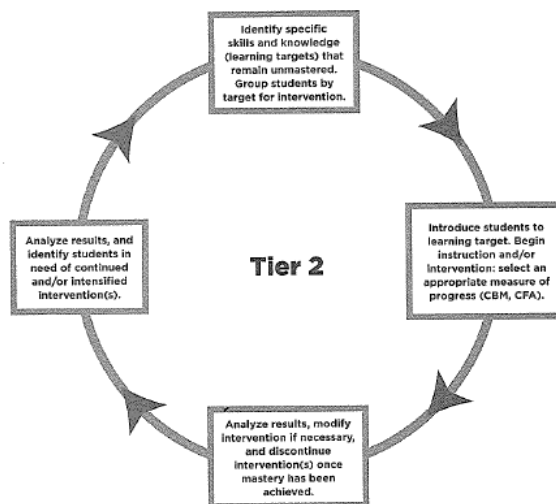
Accurate and timely assessment data are essential to make this type of determination. This is the purpose of convergent assessment (Note: a convergent assessment has only one correct response per item; assessed knowledge).

The purpose of **convergent assessment** – an ongoing process of collectively analysing evidence to target specific learning needs of each child and determine the effectiveness of the instruction the child receives in meeting these needs. Both collaborative teacher teams and the school wide- intervention team work together to measure student learning and evaluate a school's instructional effectiveness.

Just as teachers monitor student response to initial instruction, so do they monitor student response to intervention.

1. *Formative assessment*
   - The sequence of identifying a learning target, assessing a student's current level of mastery of this target, and then working to address any distance between the two, captures the essence of formative assessment.
   - Formative assessment is a process in which teachers adjust their ongoing instructional activities or students adjust the procedures they're currently using to try to learn whatever they're trying to learn. [28]
   - Should be used by teachers and students and takes place as *part of instruction.*
   - Teachers use formative assessment to learn which students did or did not respond to initial instruction at Tier 1, as well as which students did or did not respond to further intervention efforts at Tier 2.

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[28] Popham 2008 citied in Ibid p 92

- Considered common when student learning is assessed 'using the same instrument or process and according to the same criteria' [29]
- It provides a point of comparison and a basis for grouping students by need
- Needs to be focussed on the individual learning targets that underpin an essential learning standard
- Can be used to assess how children respond to initial instruction (Tier 1) and to monitor the progress of students receiving additional time and support (Tier 2).

Target causes not symptoms

The more thoroughly a team unpacks an essential standard into learning targets the better, more specific and more diagnostic the evidence gathered will be.

What we want to know is the *cause* of the student's *struggle* not the symptom.

Grades and test scores are only symptoms of a student's struggle.

Teacher need to know why a student failed to provide targeted intervention. The more targeted the intervention the more successful the outcome and the more able the team is to monitor how the child responds to the intervention.

3. Curriculum-Based Measurement

These measures are especially useful when monitoring "early literacy measures such as letter naming fluency, nonsense word fluency and phonemic segmenting and blending tasks; mathematics measures such as mat and number fact fluency; early numeracy measures such as quantity array, quantity discrimination, and number identification; and written expression such as correct word sequences"[30].

Most CBM's are efficient, accurate, inexpensive or free, sensitive to short term gains, easy to administer and allow teachers to monitor student response to initial instruction and to intervention on an ongoing, frequent basis.[31]

Revising and extending support

If the evidence demonstrated that a student is not meeting the intended outcome in Tier 1 instruction, the collaborative teacher team revises the support and provides more intensive and targeted assistance. If the child does not respond the child is referred to the SWIT.

Once a student reaches grade-level expectations, the same flexible time and resources are used to provide enrichment. To extend learning standards teachers need to differentiate for students through the following design elements:

- *Content* (what students learn and the representative materials)
- *Process* (activities through which students make sense of key ideas using the essential skills)
- *Product* (how students demonstrate and extend what they understand they can do as a result of a span of learning) and
- *Learning environment* (the classrooms conditions that set the tone and expectations of learning)

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[29] DuFours et al 2010 p63 cited in Ibid p 93
[30] Ibid p95
[31] Deno, 1985; Deno, Marsten, Shinn & Tindal, 1983; Deno, Mirkin & Chiang, 1982 cited in Ibid p95

Convergent assessment and behaviour systems

In areas of motivation, behaviour and attendance an informed, proactive approach is of supreme importance

Universal screening plays an important role in identifying behavioural issues in order to put in place preventative supports

Academic misbehaviours

Schools should universally screen at the start of each year to identify students with past excessive absenteeism and should be proactive in supporting these students as the new year begins.

Schools can then meet with student and their parents prior to the start of the school year, identify the causes of the child's absenteeism and create a plan to address these concerns.

It is important to involve students in the screening, diagnosing and monitoring of these issues.

It is also possible to screen for motivational issues. By assessing students against the Schlechty[32] five types of student responses to school tasks[33], schools can identify students in need of support and can determine the intensity and type of support needed. These 5 types are:

1. Authentic engagement – the process and completion of tasks have clear meaning and immediate value
2. Ritual engagement – the process and completion of tasks have little meaning or immediate value
3. Passive compliance – tasks are completed to avoid a negative consequence (a minimum amount of information is presented)
4. Retreatism – a student disengages from a task and does not attempt to comply but does not disrupt others
5. Rebellion – a student refuse to attempt the task, disrupts others or attempts to substitute tasks of greater interest

Social misbehaviours

An efficient effective behavioural screening tool is the *Student Risk Screening Scale* [34](SRSS). This sues a 4 point scale to objectively assess observable characteristics. The data can be analysed and student identified who are at risk and targeted interventions diagnosed. This screen can proactively and preventatively assist students and identify the types of behaviours with which groups of students may need assistance. In addition, other data (eg suspensions, office referrals) should be considered. Results of the analysis of all this data should be shared with by School Intervention Team with the whole staff to identify trends, successes and needs. A response needs to be immediate and communicated to all stakeholders (including parents and students).

Staff members may complete the screen three times a year; Term 1 week 6, mid year and end of year as a way of monitoring student progress, identifying students whose behaviours may have begun to change and to identify students for whom staff will create opportunities for success at the beginning of the following year.

Determining student needs

When children struggles with motivation, behaviour and attendance it is important to target the causes not the symptoms.

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[32] Schlechty 2001 & 2002 cited in Ibid p 97
[33] go.solution-tree.com/rti
[34] Drummond 1994 available on go.solution-tree.com/rti

The school wide intervention Team should conduct analyses to determine what might be leading to poor behaviours that negatively impact on learning.

A student experiencing behavioural challenges will often have a history of academic failure. Therefore it is important to carefully examine any ways in which a student may be struggling or feeling academically frustrated.

Caution – ensure that reputations and preconceptions do not unfairly label students. Instead gather data and evidence to guide decision making and identify which student needs additional support.

An essential element of RTI is a system of tracking and monitoring behavioural data. This allows schools to ensure that they are identifying all students in need, determine specific needs and monitor whether students and groups of students are improving.

The SWIT should consider behaviour (EDSAS) data and ask:

- Which students are involved?
- What types of behaviours are on the rise?
- In what locations are these misbehaviours occurring?
- At what times are they occurring?
- Are there grade levels that seem to have particular behavioural concerns?
- Are there teachers or other staff members who may need extra support?

The school must agree upon strict definitions for minor and major infractions. Procedures must also be developed for responding to violations of behavioural expectations. Our goal should be to ensure that students are in class, learning, to the maximum extent as possible.

Academic misbehaviours

We value what we measure and when we regularly measure attendance rates, publicize them, set goals and/or make comparisons we communicate to all stakeholders that attendance is important. Look for trends in the data and ask questions such as:

- Which students have low attendance rates?
- At what times of the year is attendance lowest?
- Are there classrooms or grade levels with lower attendance?
- What motivates students to attend?
- Is there a connection between the quality, rigor and relevance of instruction and attendance for certain students in certain classrooms?

The Self-regulatory Problem solving tool may be of use to assist students in setting goals[35]

District responsibilities for convergent assessment

Shapiro and Clemens[36] suggest four measures that District Leadership should monitor for evaluation of RTI:

- Tier placement across benchmark periods
- Rate of improvement across benchmark measures

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[35] go.solution-tree.com/rti
[36] Shapiro and Clemens 2009 cited in Ibid p 102

- Movement between tiers
- Movement within tiers

Closing Statement - One size does not fit all:

The solution to helping all students achieve success is not a one size fits all approach. Success comes when collaborative teams gather ongoing, detailed information as part of instructions, to effectively identify students who need additional time and support in their current grade-level curriculum. Through the use of data, teachers can identify exactly which student have not mastered specific essential standards; determine the specific needs of each child, subsequently matching each students' needs to the appropriate instructions and intervention; and monitor the student's response.

Assessment data must describe student progress by the student, by the standard, by the learning target.

Convergent assessment is thus an ongoing process of collectively analysing evidence to target specific learning needs of each child and determine the effectiveness of the instruction the child receives in meeting these needs.

"The assessment process…. is not simply to prove what a student has learning, but to improve that learning" [37]

Resources:

Universal screening planning guide and protocol; Proactive RTI Planning Form; Common Formative Assessment Team Protocol; Self- Regulatory Problem Solving Tool; SRSS; Behavioural Analysis Protocol and Directions; schedule intervention into the weekly plan

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[37] DuFour and Marzano 2011 cited in Ibid p 109

CREATING A SYSTEM OF INTERVENTIONS[38]

If we want to achieve our mission of high levels of learning for every child, then we must be prepared with additional time and support for every student that demonstrates the need. We must have a system of interventions designed to meet the unique needs of each child.

There are 3 considerations a school must address when creating an effective system, of interventions:

- A school must build a toolbox of effective interventions
- There must be time available during the school day to provide additional support without having students miss essential core instruction
- There must be a systematic, timely and reliable process to identify students in need of additional support

What is intervention?

Intervention is anything a school does, above and beyond what all students receive, that helps a child success in school. This additional support can be practice, method, strategy and/or program.

A system of interventions can only be as effective as the individual interventions of which it is comprised – what doesn't work is giving students more of what is not working. In addition, there is no 'silver bullet' – the Holy Grail of interventions does not exist. There is no one program that will address every child's unique needs. There is no "intervention-in-a-box" that can beat a highly effective teacher working with a targeted group of students.

A school will get much better results if it spends less time searching for the Holy Grail and more time working in collaborative teacher teams to find the most effective teaching practices for students.

The characteristics of effective interventions

Research-based:

Defensible research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant educational activities and programs.

There are limited number of scientifically research-based interventions.

A reasonable definition – research based interventions are instructional practices and programs for which there is credible evidence that the intervention can work and/or is working.

A school should utilise interventions for which they can point to research that demonstrates a practice has a high likelihood of working or can provide student data that demonstrates the practices working for the majority of students who have received the intervention.

Directive:

Interventions must be mandatory (ie not by invitation)

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[38] Ibid Chapter 6

Administered by trained professionals:

Research[39] shows that one of a school's most effective learning strategies is to have highly trained teachers work with the student most at risk

Ask "What does this child need and who on our staff is best trained to meet that need?

"Unless our most at-risk students have access to our most effective teachers, it is unlikely that any particular intervention strategy, practice or program will prove effective."[40]

Targeted:

The more targeted the intervention the more likely it will work. Most school's interventions are ineffective because they are too broad in focus and rarely address a child's individual's learning needs. Eg schools often use universal screening data to place students in reading interventions, and then put all the kids who need intensive support in the same reading intervention (some may have poor letter recognition, others who lack phonemic awareness or the ability to blend sounds, others will have difficulty recognising high frequency words or have difficulty decoding etc). It is impossible for one teacher to meet all their needs in the same intervention period.

To target interventions effectively a school should consider 2 criteria:

- A school must target interventions by the student, by the standard and by the learning target (ie: what specific essential skills or knowledge is the child lacking? Why didn't the child learn?
- A school must address the cause of a student's difficulty in learning. Why is this child demonstrating disruptive behaviour? Why did the child fail this assessment? Why is this child chronically absent? What exactly do we want students to learn from this intervention? The more specific the answers the more targeted the intervention and the more likely the student will succeed.

Timely

An effective intervention program must respond promptly when student do not learn

A school needs to identity students for extra help and/or have the ability to modify a student's interventions at least every 3 weeks.

Aligning Interventions to All Characteristics of Effectiveness

To create a toolbox of essential interventions a school must align each intervention it offers to all the essential characteristics of effective interventions – if one essential characteristic is missing from a particular intervention, the likelihood of the intervention working is compromised. A powerful activity, *The Intervention Evaluation and Alignment Chart[41]* can assist this process.

Planned for Tier support

- Tier 1 – core instruction
- Tier 2 – supplemental instruction or "some" help
- Tier 3 – intensive; a "lot of' help

A New Way of Thinking

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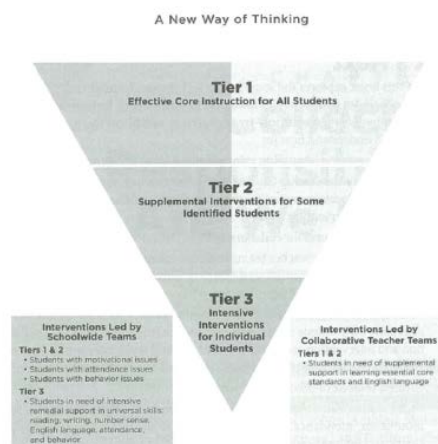
[39] Reeves (2009) cited in Ibid p 135
[40] Ibid p 136
[41] go.solution-tree.com/org

These are not intended to be a destination or a label but rather to guide our thinking. It takes all 3 levels – all 3 ways of thinking – to meet the needs of all children. How this thinking is transformed into practice can and should look different in each school, given that the needs of each schools are unique, the resources are different and the strengths of the staff vary. But, the guiding principles are the same.

There are 5 characteristics that can define an intervention as more intensive:

- *Frequency* – more often
- *Durations* – more time
- *Ratio* – the smaller the ratio the more intensive the intervention
- *Targeting* – the more aligned a particular support is with the individual needs of a specific student the more intensive the intervention
- *Training* – the more highly trained the staff member is in the student's area of need, the more intensive the intervention

Making time for interventions

Must be in school time.

Schedule flexible time into the timetable – schedule intervention/enrichment into the weekly plan to ensure that interventions can be provided without student missing new core instruction.

"Push in" time – provide additional resources to target student needs (eg specialists, SSOs, librarian, administrators).

Interventions and Behaviour Systems

Fundamentals:

- Behaviour is clearly defined as a responsibility of the SWLT
- The team clearly identifies expectations and desired behaviours
- Students are explicitly taught the desired behaviours
- The team creates an efficient system for monitoring behaviour

In understanding interventions for behaviour we must think of our response as *support* instead of intervention.

Positive reinforcement and corrective, frequent, explicit feedback are how we change unwanted behaviours

Supports must be tied to the causes of the behaviour

Remember that behaviour and academic success are inextricably intertwined.

Academic Misbehaviours

The SWLT:

- Should assume primary responsibility for ensuring that students who lack knowledge of the rules of school receive the support they need, whether these supports are provided by classroom teachers or through supplemental supports.
- Co-ordinates these supports

- Monitors student's progress

In relation to attendance issues, the SWLT meet with the family to:

- Communicate how valued the child is at school and how important daily attendance is to success
- Ask, "How can we help?"
- Agree upon an attendance incentive plan (focuses on positive consequences and is not punitive)

Social misbehaviours

Student misbehaviour comes from two primary impulses: to avoid a task or situation, or to gain attention from adults or peers.[42]

Students learn behaviour best when they are taught explicitly and directly.[43]

These students require regular, tangible and frequent feedback on their actions from adults, because without it they receive feedback from others that can shape undesired behaviours.[44]

All staff must commit to acknowledging student when they meet the expectations that have been set.

The most powerful form of acknowledgement is sincere verbal praise.

Some children will require additional support, despite a well-defined and consistently applied behavioural support system, to help them monitor his/her own behaviour. This can best be done by providing clear and frequent feedback (eg: Check-in Check-out system – CICO[45]). This is an effective data gathering and communication tool.

Behaviour interventions start with well-designed, well-executes Tier 1, just as academic interventions do.

Critical points:

- Start with building the climate through making commitments to collective responsibility.
- The behaviour of adults is a critical factor in improving the behaviour of students.
- Students can tell when adults in the school care for their welfare.
- Staff need to communicate with a caring attitude.
- Strive to establish connections with all students, particularly those who are experiencing difficulty with their behaviour.
- Be proactive.
- Take steps to ensure that the school year begins successfully for these students.
- Student behaviour improves when adults act consistently and systematically toward all students.
- The concentrate instruction by helping student to self-monitor and self-regulate their behaviour.
- Ensure that information is available through convergent assessment to continuously inform and improve the process.
- Then make certain that all students have access to the levels of support they need to be highly successful

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[42] Kohn 1996 cited in Ibid p148
[43] Van Veer 2005 cited in Ibid p148
[44] Van Veer 1996 cited in Ibid p 148
[45] CICO – identify goal; remind student at start of lesson (check in); teacher and student monitor during class how many times the child needs to be reminded; end of class compare notes (check out)

Closing statement:

Armed with effective interventions and time designated during the school day to provide the additional support to students in need, a school has the building blocks of an effective system of interventions.

Resources:

Intervention Evaluation and Alignment Chart and protocols; Concentrating, Screening and Planning for Behavioural Supports go.solution-tree.com/rti

CERTAIN ACCESS – HOW DO WE GET EVERY CHILD THERE?[46]

Is a systematic process that guarantees every student will receive the time and support needed to learn at high levels – this is the purpose of RTI. This is achieved through the process of identify, determine, monitor and revise.

Certain access is how a school demonstrates its belief that all students can learn.

Four C's:

- **Collective responsibility**: creates the culture and structures for collaboration necessary to ensure that all students success
- **Concentrated instruction**: defines with precision what all students must learn
- **Convergent assessment:** guides instruction, evaluates teaching effectiveness and identifies specifically which students are struggling and where they need help.
- **Certain access:** is how we provide every child the time and support needed to achieve

Certain access:

A tired, systematic intervention program:

- Begins with the school's ability to *identify* students who need help
- After a student has been identified, the school must *determine* the right intervention to meet the child's learning needs
- Then *monitor* each student's progress to know if the intervention is working
- If it is not working, the school must *revise* the student's support by providing more intensive and targeted assistance
- If students reach grade-level expectations, the same flexible time and resources are used to *extend* students to higher levels of achievement

Identify:

Three identification processes must be used:

1. <u>Universal screening</u> – identify kids at the start of the school year significantly at risk in foundational skills, before they fail
2. <u>Formative assessments</u> – measure student progress on current essential standards, by the student, by the standard and by the learning target. This ongoing evidence of student learning in Tier 1 is critical information for use by teacher teams to systematically identify students in need of additional support
3. <u>Create a systematic and timely process</u> for staff to recommend and discuss students who need help – the process must be deliberate, systematic, simple and efficient

3. <u>Create a systematic and timely process:</u>

A school designates one grade-level team meeting each month as their 'identification' meeting.

- All staff members who work with students attend the meeting, including support staff.

- Each staff member comes with a list of students they believe need additional help and support, specific needs and concerns for each student and recommendations for potential intervention.
- Students are recommended and discussed collectively and appropriate interventions are determined. Simple protocols are developed to keep the meeting focussed and efficient.
- This provides a 360 degree view of the child's school day.

Determine:

After a student is identified for additional time and support, the school must *determine* the specific learning needs of the child, the reason core instruction was not effective and the most appropriate intervention(s) to address these concerns.

Both the SWIT and the CTT must be involved.

Each group's specific responsibilities must be defined. This is the purpose of the RTI split pyramid – to clearly define the intervention responsibilities of teacher teams and school-wide teams that lead school support services.

- Collaborative Teacher Teams: Should take the <u>lead</u> in determining interventions for students who have not learned essential core standards.
- School Wide Team: Are responsible for creating procedures to support students with issues of motivation, attendance and behaviour issues.
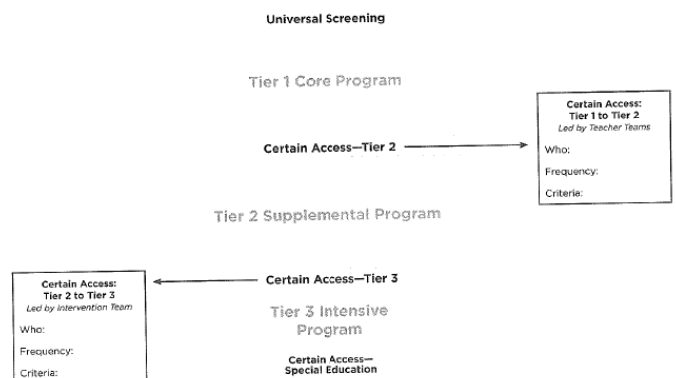
Simple Principles:

- Tier 1 and 2 are not the responsibility of either teacher teams or school wide teams it takes classroom teachers and school-wide resources
- When everyone is responsible for interventions, nobody is. For this reason final responsibility to *lead* certain interventions must be clearly defined.
- When determining who should be responsible for a particular intervention, the school should ask, Who is the best trained in this area of need? What does the child need to know and who has the skills to address those needs?

Core and more – Students should never miss Tier 1 essential core instruction – they need core and remediation – suggest collaborative teacher teams include time in their unit plan for reteaching and enrichment. Designating flexible time after the mid-unit common formative assessment, and then again after the summative assessment, allow intervention time for students who need additional time to learn without dropping behind in new instruction.

Monitor:

After a school has *identified* students in need of extra help, *determined* the correct intervention to meet the child's need(s) and *monitored* each child's progress, the school will need to decide to *revise* or *extend* interventions.

At Tier 3, school wide teams take lead responsibility for intensive support of students with severe motivational issues, chronic absenteeism and extreme behaviour concerns. Additionally school wide teams assume lead responsibility for students who are significantly behind in universal skills of learning – reading, writing, number sense and English Language. They assume this responsibility because these students are not only struggling with them mastery of current grade level standards, they are also significantly weak in critical foundation skills for those standards; they often have more than one area of concern and these student need more than *some* help to catch up - they need *lots* of help.

From Tier 2 to Tier 3, the goal is to get a 360 degree view of the student from the perspectives of all the reasons why a student may struggle in school. These students should still have access to core curriculum which makes classroom teachers a critical part of the solution.

Core and more – intensive intervention should not replace a student's access to core instruction. Kids need core instruction and remediation.

Extend:

When a school embraces high levels of learning for every child, then their goal becomes not merely to get every student to a minimum of proficiency but to maximise every student's academic potential. The thinking is no different with student who are struggling or above grade-level curriculum.

Special Education Resources

The goal of RTI is to get past asking "What help does this student qualify for?" and instead ask "What does this child need and who on our staff is best trained to provide this support?"[47]

In the end it is not the label that should determine interventions, but the child's need and which staff member is best trained in the targeted area.

The pyramid guides our thinking. A school's efforts to ensure all students learn at high levels start with all students having access to a grade-level curriculum and quality instruction – this is **Tier 1**. No matter how well a school differentiates core instruction, some student will need help after additional teaching – this is **Tier 2**. Other student will enter grade-level instruction with specific gaps in foundational skills and/or severe obstacles related to effort, attendance or behaviour. These student will need a lot of help to success – this is **Tier 3.**

It takes all 3 levels – all 3 ways of thinking – to meet the needs of all children. Howe this thinking is transformed into practice can and should look different from school to school, as the needs of each school are unique, the resources are different and the strengths of the staff vary. But, the guiding principles are still the same.

Closing statement:

Certain access demonstrated best how the four Cs are not individual acts or disjointed protocols, but four interdependent guiding principles that create a continuous process focussed on student learning. ***Certain access*** *is guided by the fundamental assumptions of collective responsibility – that all student can learn at high levels, and that we accept responsibility to ensure this outcomes for every child.*

The ***collaborative teams*** *created to achieve this mission are the engines that drive the work**.*

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[47] Ibid p 179

Concentrated instruction focuses on the school's core instruction and interventions, bringing clarity to the essential learning outcomes.

Convergent assessment provides the ongoing information necessary to identify the specific learning needs of each student, as well as the effectiveness of our efforts.

Certain access forges these outcomes in a tiered, systematic process that provides every student the time and support necessary to learn at high levels.

Each of the four Cs represents an essential element needed for student to learn; only when all four are united in a continuous process can they secure the promise of learning for all.

Resources:

Getting started with RTI; designing a system of interventions; additional resources – available from solution-tree.com/rti

A NEW VISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION[48]

What happens when these tiers of support do not meet a child's unique needs?

If a school implements RTI properly, a small number of students will be qualified for special education. Specialised resources, expertise and learning environments may be needed..

The traditional process used to identify a specific learning disability is the 'discrepancy model' or 'wait to fail' model.[49] Once a child has failed, it is nearly impossible for the child to catch up. [50]

As educators, we must move beyond providing students with special needs the right to merely attend school, and instead must ensure that they maximise their learning potential. To achieve this goal, we must rethink the way we use special education resources.

Identifying the real special needs

Transforming special education must begin with a more accurate way of identifying those students who truly have special needs. We must be confident that the student truly has special learning needs. When considering a student for special education, a school should ask the following questions[51]:

Tier 1:

- Did the student have access to a rigorous grade-level curriculum?
- What evident do we have that our school's initial instruction was effective for similar students?
- Was the student given additional time and differentiated instruction during Tier 1 instruction?

Tier 2:

- Did we identify the student for supplemental time and support in a timely manner?
- What was the child's specific learning needs?
- What was the cause of the student's struggles?

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[48] Ibid Epilogue
[49] Ibid p192
[50] Fuchs and Young 2066 citied in Ibid p 192
[51] Ibid pp 193-4

- What research-based interventions were used to address the student's specific learning needs?
- What evidence do we have that these interventions were effective for similar students?

Tier 3:

- When was the child referred for intensive support?
- What quality problem-solving process was used to better identify the child's specific learning needs and the cause (s) of the student's struggles?
- What research-based interventions were used to address the student's specific learning needs?
- What evidence do we have that these interventions were effective for student with similar needs?
- Are there any other interventions or supports that should be tired before considering special education placement?
- Do we have consensus from the SWIT that identification is necessary and appropriate? Is this decision defensible?

Qualifying a student for special education is not in itself the solution to the student's learning need, but it creates opportunities to provide the child even more highly specialised, and personalised support. This is where the role of service providers, such as Speech Pathologist should concentrate their work[52].

Closing statement

Implementing RTI is not easy. Ensuring that every student success at schools is difficult, demanding work. There will be undoubtedly be challenges and unexpected obstacles for any school with the courage to embrace this work. The journey may be challenging, but it is worthy.

Resources

Essential questions for special education identification, available from: ago.solution-tree.com/rti

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[52] Ibid p 195