

**Oklahoma Response to Intervention**

*Responding to, reaching, and effectively teaching all children*

Oklahoma State Department of Education

# Response to Intervention (RtI) Guidance Document

July 2010





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*Responding to, reaching, and effectively teaching all children*

### **Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE)**

The Response to Intervention Guide was developed utilizing a collaborative effort among many stakeholders representing a cross representation of personnel from a variety of departments. The primary goal of the committee has been to collaborate in the development of a shared vision of Response to Intervention (RtI) in Oklahoma; methods to disseminate information and guidance about RtI; and procedures for effective implementation in local school districts.

#### **Stakeholders Represented:**

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In order to meet the growing challenges of diversity and rising academic expectations, Oklahoma educators are providing students with additional opportunities, supports, and structures to learn and succeed. Recent educational and legislative efforts in Oklahoma, including the *Achieving Classroom Excellence Act* (ACE) and the *Reading Sufficiency Act* (RSA) support the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) which includes Reading First, Title I programs, and school accountability and support systems. These programs have focused on increasing the standards of achievement for Oklahoma students and have encouraged the use of strong, research-based curriculum at all levels of instruction.

Oklahoma schools are responding to rising expectations and diverse populations by monitoring student achievement and behavior more closely and by searching for appropriate interventions to help every student succeed. Educators are working collaboratively to provide differentiated instruction and behavioral supports tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners, including students performing above and below their peers. The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework offers a structure for schools to improve learning through a schoolwide system of challenging curriculum and interventions delivered through a tiered approach that includes increasingly more intense levels of student support and instruction.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about RtI and how this framework can help you meet the needs of the children in your school. This document is intended to provide an overview of RtI, including the core components and steps for implementation. The State Department of Education is committed to supporting Oklahoma educators in the RtI process in order to provide challenging curriculum and raise achievement of all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Garrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandy Garrett  
State Superintendent

# Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Section 1 - Introduction   | 6  |
| Purpose of the Document .....  | 6  |
| The Oklahoma Context.....  | 6  |
| Why Response to Intervention (RtI)?.....                                   | 6  |
| Section 2 - What is Response to Intervention? .....                        | 8  |
| Resources for RtI .....  | 10 |
| Summary of Essential Features of Response to Intervention in Oklahoma..... | 11 |
| Section 3 - Tier I: Core Curriculum with Differentiated Instruction .....  | 12 |
| Focus .....  | 12 |
| Setting .....  | 13 |
| Interventions .....  | 13 |
| Interventionists .....   | 13 |
| Assessments .....  | 13 |
| Data Analysis and Decision Making.....                                     | 14 |
| Tier 1 Resources .....   | 15 |
| Section 4 -Tier II: Supplemental Targeted Interventions .....              | 16 |
| Focus .....  | 16 |
| Settings.....  | 16 |
| Interventions.....   | 16 |
| Interventionists .....   | 17 |
| Assessments .....  | 17 |
| Data Analysis and Decision Making.....                                     | 18 |
| Tier II Resources .....  | 20 |
| Section 5 - Tier III: Intensive Targeted Instruction .....                 | 21 |
| Focus .....  | 21 |
| Setting .....  | 21 |
| Interventionists .....   | 21 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Interventions .....                        | 22 |
| Assessments .....                          | 22 |
| Data Analysis and Decision Making.....     | 22 |
| Tier III Resources .....                   | 23 |
| Section 6 - Families and RTI.....          | 24 |
| Families and RTI Resources .....           | 24 |
| Section 7 - Glossary of Related Terms..... | 25 |
| Section 8 – References .....               | 31 |



## SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

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### **Purpose of the Document**

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview for Response to Intervention (RtI) practices in Oklahoma and explain the core components of RtI. This RtI guidance document is designed to assist school districts in understanding RtI, its origins in educational practice and research, its usefulness and value, and how it can be implemented. It is not intended to be a substitute for training but rather is intended to increase a school's understanding of the various aspects of RtI.

Oklahoma schools are responding to rising expectations and increasingly diverse populations by more closely monitoring student achievement and by identifying appropriate interventions to help every student succeed. Educators are working collaboratively to provide differentiated instruction tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners. The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework offers schools an opportunity to meet the challenges and raise student achievement through a schoolwide system of tiered interventions and assessments.

### **The Oklahoma Context**

In our changing global society, it is imperative that we recognize the challenges inherent in meeting the diverse needs of Oklahoma students. Academic, social, and behavioral expectations are rising for each and every student in our public schools. Many students require additional services each year in order to meet these rising expectations.

The RtI framework uses the expertise of school professionals and parents in a proactive format which puts student needs first and bases decisions on data. Students who fail to make adequate progress within an intervention tier can be referred to *data review teams* to determine an appropriate course of action. The strength of the data collected in the RtI process allows for better decisions about which students need continued general education interventions and which students will qualify for intensive special education programs.

### **Why Response to Intervention (RtI)?**

RtI is built on the idea of intervening early to prevent failure and to maximize the effectiveness of grade-level curriculum and instruction. It is not an initiative or program, but rather a framework for providing high-quality curriculum and instruction to all students and intervention support for some students. Under the RtI framework, schools can meet the requirements of *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), and recent educational and legislative efforts in Oklahoma,

including the *Achieving Classroom Excellence Act* (ACE) and the *Reading Sufficiency Act* (RSA). Like the intent of RtI, these Acts focus on increasing the standards of achievement for Oklahoma students and encouraging the use of strong, research-based curriculum at all levels of instruction.

The *Achieving Classroom Excellence Act* (ACE) requires students to demonstrate mastery of the state content standards in order to receive a high school diploma. Beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the 2008-2009 school year, ACE requires students to show proficiency through the Oklahoma School Testing Program in Algebra I, English II, and two of the following courses: Algebra II, Biology I, English III, Geometry, and United States History. Schools must provide remediation for students who are unable to meet these requirements on their first attempt and intervention for middle school and high school students who are likely to struggle in their pursuit of these standards. This legislation builds on the *Reading Sufficiency Act* (RSA) which requires schools to provide individualized attention, intervention, and remediation for students in first through third grade who are struggling to read on grade level.

Both ACE and RSA support NCLB intent, which expects schools to provide intervention and remediation, primarily in reading and mathematics, to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve at high levels. Reading First and Title I reading and mathematics programs, which fall under NCLB, provide systematic processes for meeting the needs of low-performing students.

Additional state activities that support and align with an RtI framework include:

- Oklahoma Advanced Placement Incentives Program
- Gifted and Talented Education Programs
- Oklahoma Middle School Mathematics Laboratories
- Oklahoma Alternative Education Program
- Oklahoma Building Academic Vocabulary Initiative
- Twenty-First Century Schools
- Oklahoma Robotics Grants
- State Superintendent's Arts Awards

In an RtI framework, these and other state activities aim to provide challenging and appropriate curriculum for students at all levels of ability, interest, and previous experiences.



## SECTION 2 - WHAT IS RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION?

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Response to Intervention, often referred to simply as RtI, is a prevention framework that involves schools:

- Providing a research-based curriculum to all students in academic and behavior areas.
- Identifying students who are not meeting standards.
- Planning and providing research-based interventions in a timely manner.
- Monitoring student progress closely.
- Intervening at increasingly intensive levels if students do not progress toward achievement standards.

Although the research for RtI is primarily in reading or math, it can be applied to all content areas. It is an overarching framework that aligns all school services and supports (general and special education) to ensure success for all students.

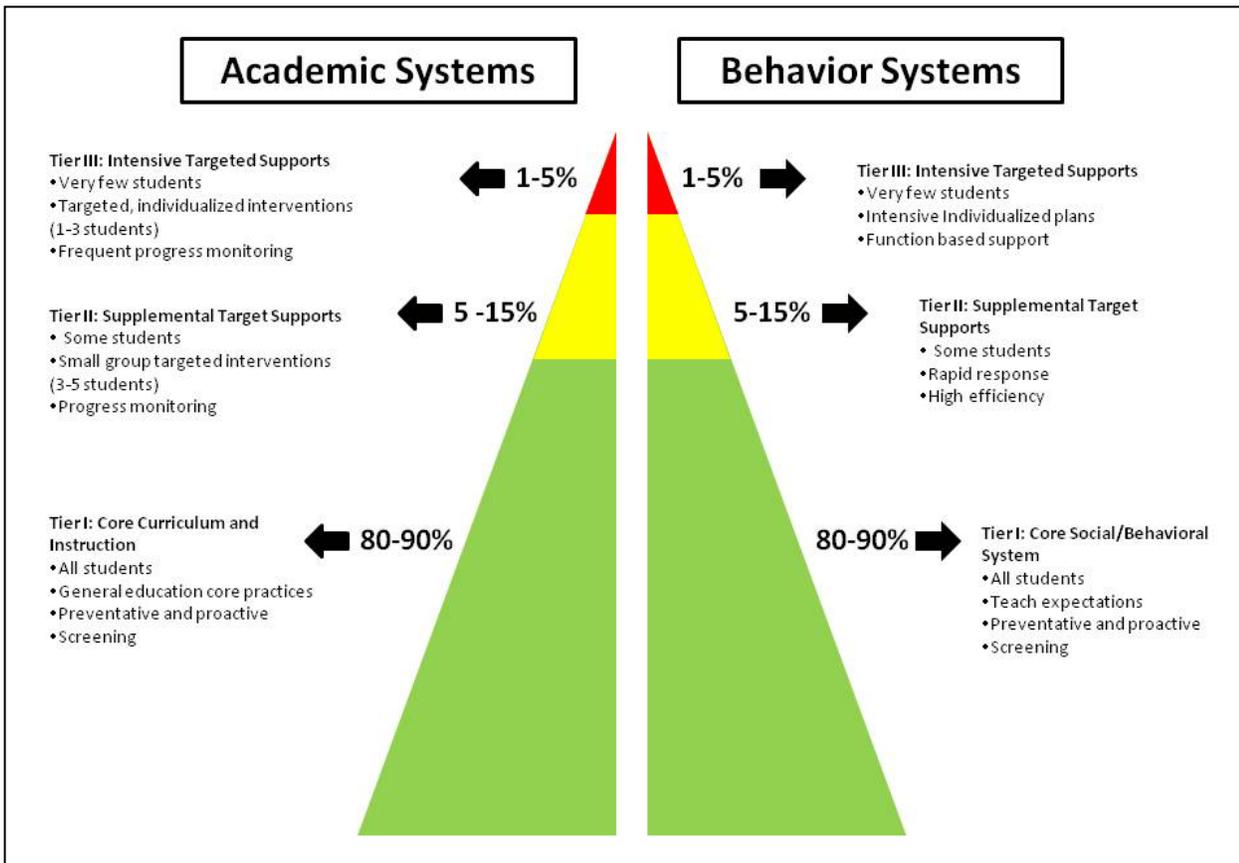
The National Center for Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)> defines RtI as follows:

*“Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities.”*

While the research does not support any specific number of tiers, the Oklahoma State Department of Education recommends a three-tiered framework of assessment and intervention support. Figure 1 shows how schools in Oklahoma can deliver increasing intensive levels of tiered-instruction and support in academics and behavior. A brief description of each tier is provided below:

- Tier 1: Core Curriculum with Differentiated Instruction is provided to all students and should be sufficient for approximately 80-90% of students.
- Tier 2: Supplemental Targeted Instruction is typically provided in small groups and may be necessary to meet the needs of those students who do not make adequate progress in Tier I. Approximately 5-15% of students may need Tier 2 support.
- Tier 3: Intensive Targeted Instruction is often provided individually or in very small groups and should only be necessary for a very small number of students, perhaps 1-5%.

**Figure 1. Response to Intervention Schoolwide Systems of Prevention for Academics (e.g., math, reading, writing) and Behavior.**



Note: Both sides of the triangle feature the same levels of prevention and support: Core, Supplemental, and Intensive Supports. Figure 1 was adapted from the *Handbook of Positive Behavior Support* (Sailor, Dunlop, Sugai & Horner, 2008, p. 739).

An RtI framework uses a multitiered model of assessment and interventions. At the core of an effective multitiered approach is Tier I: Core Curriculum with Differentiated Instruction. All students receive access to research-based core curriculum and instructional strategies within the general education setting. *Differentiated instruction* maximizes the progress of all students by addressing critical differences among them through the use of flexible grouping, different instructional materials, or different ways of presenting the same content (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). As a component of Tier I, all students participate in *benchmark* screening (at least three times a year) that is used to assess students' responsiveness to Tier I with differentiated instruction and the overall effectiveness of Tier I instruction (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

When differentiated instruction alone does not result in the expected successes for individual students, the RtI framework provides additional time, support, or instruction. RtI derives its name from the very practice of offering *research-based interventions* provided by the general education teacher or other trained interventionists, such as additional instruction or small group instruction, and then systematically evaluating the student's response. Many teachers and schools are already engaged in these kinds of

activities through Reading First, Title I, ACE Remediation, and other similar programs. The strength of RtI is that at the earliest signs of a student's lack of adequate progress with instruction, adjustments in instruction are made to fit the student's needs. An essential activity in these efforts is close monitoring of the student's progress and the intervention's effectiveness. Decisions about student needs and responsiveness are based on established criteria for *data-based decision making*, using an evidence-based approach. In an RtI framework, data teams have access to universal or benchmark screening data (typically three times a year), frequent progress monitoring data (every one to two weeks), state test data, and other classroom data to answer important student, classroom, grade, and school questions.

In addition to academic difficulties, interfering behavior, or behavior that may prohibit a student from benefiting from instruction is often a factor that must be considered when trying to determine why a student is not performing at a satisfactory level or achieving a projected rate of learning. Because academics and behavior are closely connected, they need to be addressed simultaneously. Students who exhibit interfering behaviors should be screened and monitored just as those who are experiencing academic difficulties. Many Oklahoma schools are utilizing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model to provide incentives for students who exhibit appropriate school behaviors and to provide interventions for students whose behaviors interfere with their ability to learn.

### **Oklahoma State Department of Education RtI Implementation Guide**

The current guidance document provides a framework for understanding RtI and guidelines for the components of RtI. However, because the implementation of RtI within any given site will vary, specific procedures for implementation are not included within this document. An implementation guide will accompany this guidance document and provide examples of the components of RtI designed to illustrate RtI in practice. This guide is not an exhaustive source of examples, but a first step in illustrating the various components of RtI.

### **Resources for RtI**

Oklahoma State Department of Education Web site <[www.sde.state.ok.us](http://www.sde.state.ok.us)>

National Center on Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>

*Description: Various resources available in Center's library under "What is RTI?" and "Models of RTI"*

Best Evidence Encyclopedia <[www.bestevidence.org](http://www.bestevidence.org)>

*Description: Provides summaries about the evidence supporting educational programs for children Grades K – 12.*

RTI Action Network <[www.rtinetwork.org](http://www.rtinetwork.org)>

## Summary of Essential Features of Response to Intervention in Oklahoma

| <b>Essential Features</b>                | <b>Tier I</b><br>(Section 3 – pg. 12)  | <b>Tier II</b><br>(Section 4 – pg. 16)   | <b>Tier III</b><br>(Section 5 – pg. 21)   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Focus</b>                             | All students receiving general education core practices.   | Students failing to meet important benchmarks who have not responded to Tier I core practices.   | Students failing to meet important benchmarks who have not responded to Tier I or Tier II efforts.                                |
| <b>Setting</b>                           | General education classrooms   | General education classrooms or other general education locations within a school.   | General education classrooms or other general education locations within a school.  |
| <b>Interventions</b>                     | Research-based, comprehensive core delivered with differentiation of instruction.  | Supplemental short-term interventions, delivered to homogeneous groups (i.e., students with similar needs); teacher: student ratio up to 1:4 or 1:6. | Supplemental intensive short-term interventions; teacher: student ratio up to 1:3.  |
| <b>Interventionists</b>                  | General education teachers with collaboration from school specialists.   | General education teachers, specialists or other interventionists trained for Tier II interventions.   | Specialists or other interventionists trained for Tier III intervention (including general educators with appropriate training).  |
| <b>Assessments</b>                       | Screening of all students at least three times per year.   | Frequent progress monitoring (e.g., every one to two weeks).   | Very frequent progress monitoring (e.g., at least once per week).   |
| <b>Data analysis and decision making</b> | District, school and grade/content area data-review teams analyze universal assessment data to establish the overall efficacy of Tier I, identify ways to improve and differentiate instruction within a grade or course, and identify individual students in need of Tier II support. | Data review teams match students with and monitor the effectiveness of appropriate Tier II interventions.  | Data review teams decide how to choose, individualize, and intensify interventions for students receiving Tier III interventions. |



## SECTION 3 - TIER I: CORE CURRICULUM WITH DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

### TIER I

- **FOCUS:** All students receiving general education core practices.
- **SETTING:** General education classrooms.
- **INTERVENTIONS:** Research-based, comprehensive core delivered with differentiation of instruction.
- **INTERVENTIONISTS:** General education teachers with collaboration from school specialists.
- **ASSESSMENTS:** Screening of all students at least three times per year.
- **DATA ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING:** District, school and grade/content area data-review teams analyze universal assessment data to establish the overall efficacy of Tier I, identify ways to improve and differentiate instruction within a grade or course, and identify individual students in need of Tier II support.

### Focus

The focus of Tier I is on all students receiving academic and/or behavior instruction within the general education classroom. A first step in RtI implementation is to determine what percentage of students are responding to the Tier I instruction using the core curriculum (both academic and behavior). Four questions can be answered using valid and reliable screening assessment data:

- Is the core curriculum effective? (Roughly 80% of students should be reaching benchmarks)
- Have students had access to effective curriculum? (Barriers to access may include excessive student or teacher absences, high student mobility rates, restrictive environments, excessive suspensions, etc.)
- Which students are not meeting academic or behavioral expectations?
- Does any overrepresentation of particular student subgroups (e.g., grade level, classroom, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) group) exist in those students identified as at risk? Is Tier I equally effective for all student subgroups?

To support general educators in Tier I, specific student outcomes, which are reasonable for students to achieve by the end of the school year, should be provided by the school district and referenced regularly and consistently by all teachers. These student outcomes should be aligned with the *State Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)*. An effective Tier I means that at least 80% of the students are achieving these outcomes without additional instructional or behavioral supports. If more than 20% of students are not successful in the core curriculum, then the core practices are not effective. Instructional

and curricular variables should be analyzed to determine where the core curriculum and instruction need to be strengthened.

## **Setting**

Tier I core instruction with differentiation occurs within the general education classroom.

## **Interventions**

For effective Tier I, core curriculum and instruction must be research based and comprehensive enough to address competencies that research has shown to be important to students' achievement. Failure of the curriculum to address key competencies in different academic and social/behavioral domains is a frequent cause of ineffective Tier I practices.

High-quality curricula and curricular benchmarks provide teachers with information about what to teach but not how to teach. How to teach must be informed by research within specific domains, as well as by research on effective instructional strategies across domains. For example, research in the domain of reading has identified numerous instructional strategies and methods that are effective for teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). This kind of research must be a foundation for high-quality reading instruction. Other research on effective instructional strategies (Ellis, 2005; Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001; Reeves, 2002) tends to cut across academic domains and sometimes behavioral domains as well. For example, an effective instructional strategy such as setting objectives for student performance and providing explicit feedback can be applied in a wide array of content areas and behavior. Instruction in Tier I should also be *culturally responsive*, or appropriate for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Instruction within Tier I must be differentiated, which allows teachers to address a range of learning needs by adapting instruction or instructional materials in a variety of ways, rather than expecting all students to learn from the same style of teaching.

## **Interventionists**

Tier I is delivered by general education teachers. School specialists may collaborate in the design and implementation of the core curriculum.

## **Assessments**

An essential first step in Tier I assessment involves obtaining or developing *screening assessments* (also known as *benchmark assessments* and *universal common assessment*) in important academic domains (e.g., reading, mathematics, writing) and in behavioral and social-emotional areas. These screening assessments should be given at least three times per year to all students in a grade in early fall, winter, and spring. Data from the benchmark assessments document the adequacy of curriculums and instruction for most students, with individual students who fail to meet benchmarks receiving differentiated instruction in the general education classroom from the general education teacher, prior to consideration for Tier II intervention. This kind of assessment system permits ongoing monitoring of all students; alerts schools when curriculum or instruction is not working for large numbers of students; and

allows for changes in curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment. The data also supports the identification of students requiring early intervention in a timely manner.

Selection of appropriate screening assessments is vital to ensuring that assessments are technically adequate (i.e., reliable and valid) and do not waste valuable instructional time. Most authorities recommend the use of *curriculum-based measures* (CBMs) to monitor student progress in Tier I (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Fuchs, 2004; Hosp & Hosp, 2003; McCook, 2006). The National Center on Response to Intervention, <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>, has excellent technical reviews and purchasing information of commercially available screening tools in math and reading and progress monitoring tools for students in kindergarten through high school. Curriculum-based measures can also be developed by individual school districts; guidance for doing so can be found in McCook (2006).

Locally developed and generic CBMs are intended as general indicators of overall student competence in a domain, not as detailed assessments of specific student strengths and weaknesses. For example, CBMs for reading typically are fluency-based measures that involve briefly timing a student who is reading isolated words or passages aloud. The student's score is the number of words read correctly within a given unit of time. CBMs provide a fast, easy, technically adequate (reliable and valid) way for teachers to track the progress of large groups of students. They are highly sensitive to student growth in overall reading competence (or overall math competence, in the case of math CBMs), as well as highly predictive of student's performance on standardized and high stakes testing (Deno, 2003; Fuchs, 2004; Hosp & Hosp, 2003).

### **Data Analysis and Decision Making**

Data analysis and decision making should occur collaboratively using teams. The data examined collaboratively by data teams focus largely on student assessments but can include other kinds of data as well (e.g., office discipline referrals, suspension and expulsion rates, retention rates, referrals to special education, or school climate surveys). Data teams may be created at various levels within the district and school. Communication and collaboration across levels (i.e., district, school, grade/content area) on a regular basis through vertical teaming are also very important.

- **District-level data teams** are responsible for examining districtwide data. Analyzing data across school sites is essential for allocating resources and determining professional development needs.
- **School-level data teams** are responsible for analyzing benchmark data and should meet at least quarterly. School-level teams should include school administrators, content/grade-level general educators and specialists, such as school psychologists, special educators, language arts consultants, ESL teachers, and mental health personnel. A critical first task is to verify that the overall curriculum, instruction, climate and behavior system work for most students across classrooms. Analyzing data across classrooms within a grade (or within a content area/course) is essential. A deficient curriculum generally will have a broad impact across classrooms within a grade, whereas a problem with instruction is likely to affect some classrooms but not others. A

problem with fidelity of implementation also is likely to affect some but not all classrooms, unless the implementation failure is a broad one, involving all teachers in a grade. In other words, if more than 20% of students are failing to achieve across all classrooms in a grade, then the problem is most likely a curricular one, or a broad failure of implementation. If some classrooms are doing well and others are not, then the problem is likely to be instruction and/or fidelity of implementation within the low-achieving classrooms. Determining and addressing the underlying problem is vital to ensure the overall effectiveness of the education system and to prevent high numbers of students requiring intervention.

- **Grade-level or content teams** examine data at the level of a particular grade (e.g., second grade) or content area (e.g., social studies). Data teams are responsible for developing and monitoring improvement plans, as well as for analyzing data at their respective levels.

### **Tier 1 Resources**

National Center on Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>

*Description: Evidence-based tools and assessments on tiered instruction, progress monitoring, and screening available under “Tools/Interventions” tab; considerations and ideas for teachers available for RTI stakeholders in Center’s library.*

Florida Center for Reading Research <[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)>

*Description: Reading interventions available for Pre-K – Grade 12.*

Center on Instruction <[www.centeroninstruction.org](http://www.centeroninstruction.org)>

*Description: Resources and research articles available on developing and implementing RTI in schools.*



## SECTION 4 -TIER II: SUPPLEMENTAL TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

### TIER II

- **FOCUS:** Students failing to meet important benchmarks who have not responded to Tier I core practices.
- **SETTING:** General education classrooms or other general education locations within a school.
- **INTERVENTIONS:** Supplemental short-term interventions, delivered to homogeneous groups (i.e., students with similar needs); teacher: student ratio up to 1:4 or 1:6.
- **INTERVENTIONISTS:** General education teachers, specialists or other interventionists trained for Tier II interventions.
- **ASSESSMENTS:** Frequent progress monitoring (e.g., every one to two weeks).
- **DATA ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING:** Data review teams match students with appropriate Tier II interventions and monitor the effectiveness of the interventions.

### Focus

Tier II interventions are provided to students who fail to attain benchmarks despite receiving research-based curriculum and adequate differentiated instruction in the Tier I setting. In addition to the Tier II interventions, students continue to receive core instruction from the classroom teacher, as well as the schoolwide behavioral system of support in a safe school climate.

### Setting

Tier II interventions may be delivered within the general education classroom or other general education locations within a school (e.g., library, reading lab, math lab, writing center).

### Interventions

Tier II interventions are short term (e.g., 8–20 weeks) and part of the general education system. Tier II interventions should be consistently scheduled and of sufficient duration to impact the child's performance (e.g., 30 to 45 minutes per session, at least three to four times per week, for 8-20 weeks). Additionally, Tier II interventions typically occur in small groups of students (e.g., four to six) who exhibit the same pattern of difficulty (e.g., difficulties with math problem solving, phonemic awareness and phonics, or social skills) and who are performing at similar levels.

Interventions must be research based, feasible for educators to use, and accurately target the student's area(s) of difficulty. These interventions are supplemental to the core academic instruction that is delivered in the classroom by the classroom teacher or other specialists. These interventions *do not*

*replace core instruction*, nor do they remove responsibility for the child’s learning from the classroom teacher; rather, students receive support both in Tier I and Tier II.

For students experiencing academic difficulties, interventions may include instruction that targets one particular focus area (e.g., phonics skills, spelling, math concepts), or targets multiple areas (e.g., automatic recall of facts, computational algorithms such as regrouping, and problem solving in math), depending on the student’s needs. For students exhibiting behavioral difficulties, interventions may include increased focus and targeted attention on the school climate, social skills training, self-management programs, school-based adult mentors, and increased academic support in the case of students whose behavioral difficulties are linked to academic weaknesses. Like academic interventions, social/behavioral interventions should be research based.

A Tier II intervention must be delivered as intended according to the program specifications and/or the research. This is referred to as honoring the *fidelity* of the intervention. During the intervention period, observations by administrators and other educators may occur in order to assess the fidelity of the implementation as well as the amount of progress being made. If appropriately selected and implemented with fidelity, interventions should result in growth for most students.

### **Interventionists**

Tier II interventionists may be classroom teachers, specialized teachers, or other interventionists specifically trained for Tier II supplemental instruction.

### **Assessments**

Assessment data from students who are not responding to Tier I core practices must be examined carefully to define the nature of difficulty that a student is experiencing and to determine which type of Tier II intervention is most appropriate for the student’s needs. Accurate pinpointing of individual student’s needs and selection of appropriate interventions are critical to the success of Tier II interventions. For example, in reading, some students may require interventions focused on phonemic awareness and phonics, whereas others may need help primarily with fluency or comprehension. If students’ difficulties are not accurately pinpointed and/or targeted with an inappropriate intervention—for example, if a reader has difficulties in phonemic awareness and receives an intervention primarily targeting comprehension—Tier II efforts will not be successful.

Tier II assessments are supplemental to those administered in Tier I and may include both diagnostic and progress monitoring measures. In many cases, the screening assessments administered in Tier I will provide the interventionist enough information to determine appropriate Tier II interventions. However, in some cases, additional diagnostic assessments may be necessary to define and identify interventions appropriate for the student’s area of need. For example, at the middle school or high school levels, poor reading comprehension can revolve around several different underlying patterns of difficulty (Leach, Scarborough & Rescorla, 2003), including poor word decoding (phonics) skills, poor vocabulary and language comprehension, poor reading fluency, or weaknesses in all of these areas. Assessment of these

underlying component reading abilities often will be necessary to identify the student's targeted focus area for improvement and determine an appropriate intervention.

Once the targeted skill has been determined, a suitable progress monitoring assessment matched to that skill should be selected. These types of assessments are used to measure the student's progress during the intervention period and help to decide whether the intervention is working. Tier II progress monitoring is frequent (e.g., every one to two weeks). Therefore, the assessment must not only target the student's area of need, but must also be relatively quick, in order not to consume an inordinate proportion of the intervention time. Moreover, the assessment must be technically adequate for frequent administrations by providing alternate, equivalent forms (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). As noted previously, the National Center on Response to Intervention, <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>, has useful information on the technical adequacy of a variety of commercially or publicly available progress monitoring tools in reading and math for kindergarten through high school.

Prior to the intervention, the student's *baseline* level of functioning must be established. For a student exhibiting behavioral difficulties involving time on task, the baseline phase might involve three separate observations of the student's time on task during a representative period of the school day, with the student's average time on task across observations employed as his or her baseline. For students experiencing academic difficulties, baseline functioning sometimes may be determined through the students' performance on Tier I universal common assessments relevant to their targeted area(s) of need. A long-range goal also needs to be set for each student. In academic domains, the long-range goal might be attaining a particular academic benchmark or academic standard. In the domains of behavior, social-emotional functioning, or mental health, appropriate goals can be determined depending on the quality of the school climate, school behavioral expectations, social norms or student self-perceptions. Research supports the idea that ambitious goals tend to lead to better student outcomes than do more limited goals (McCook, 2006).

### **Data Analysis and Decision Making**

*Data review teams* are responsible for Tier II data analysis, decision making, and intervention development. The teacher responsible for core instruction should always be present at team meetings. Other team members may rotate depending on the specific needs of the student being considered for intervention (e.g., ESL teacher, school social worker).

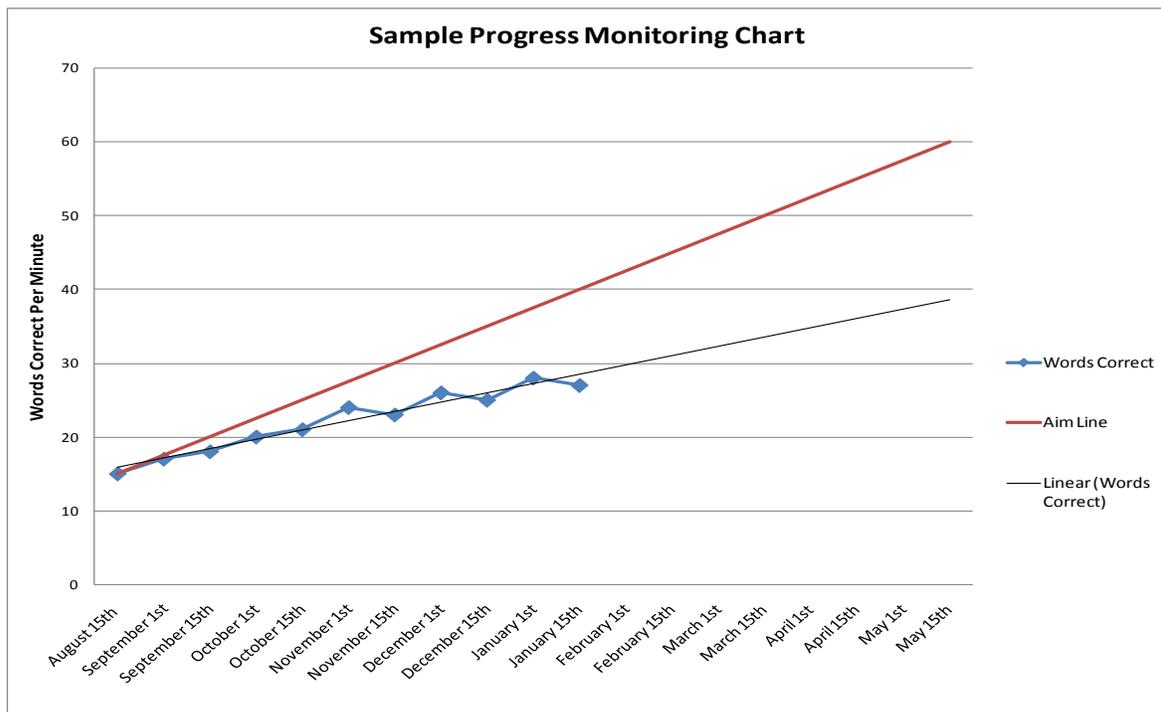
Teams target areas for intervention, match appropriate interventions to students' needs, choose appropriate progress monitoring tools, analyze progress monitoring data to determine whether students are showing growth, change or modify interventions as needed, and identify students not responding to Tier II efforts. Teams also develop a written intervention plan for each student, which should include:

- The student's specific focus area(s) for improvement
- A baseline level of functioning and long range goal
- A description of the intervention, including duration and setting
- An identification of appropriate interventionist(s)

- The specific progress monitoring tool that will be used and frequency of administration
- A date to reconvene to evaluate the student’s progress.

Once a student’s baseline level of functioning has been established and the intervention has been implemented, progress is monitored through probes administered every one or two weeks. Multiple data points will be necessary to determine whether there is a *trend* in the student’s performance toward improvement. For example, if progress is monitored weekly, it will take at least three or four data points during the intervention period collected over a period of three or four weeks to see whether there is any trend in the student’s progress monitoring data (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Many commercially available progress monitoring systems allow users to determine a student’s *trendline*, the line of best fit when the student’s successive scores during intervention are plotted on a graph; the slope of the trendline indicates the student’s rate of improvement. The slope of the trendline is compared to that of the *aimline* (or *goalline*), which is the line connecting the student’s baseline performance to a data point representing the long-range goal. If the slope of the trendline is less than that of the aimline, the student is not progressing at a sufficient rate to meet the goal. Figure 3 illustrates essential components of a progress monitoring graph.

Figure 3: Essential components of a progress monitoring graph.



Extensive discussion of how to analyze data from progress monitoring assessments and interventions, with numerous examples and sample graphs, can be found in Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2005) and McCook (2006).

In some cases, if it is determined that a student is making very limited or no progress during the intervention period, student data should be analyzed collaboratively by data review teams to see if changes to the intervention, or different interventions, are necessary prior to the end of the intervention period. That is, Tier II may (and often will) include more than one intervention for a given student.

Assuming that Tier I is effective for most students, Tier II interventions should be successful for 80% or more of students in Tier II. If this is not the case, then there is likely a problem in one or more of these areas: accurate pinpointing of students' needs, selection of appropriate interventions, matching of interventions to students' needs, fidelity of implementation, effectiveness of the interventionist(s), or grouping practices. Documentation of these interventions and their impact on student outcomes is critical to identifying and replicating evidence-based practices and in assisting in the identification of a child with a learning disability should the team identify the need for a comprehensive evaluation.

## **Tier II Resources**

National Center on Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>

*Description: Evidence-based tools and assessments on tiered instruction, progress monitoring, and screening available under "Tools/Interventions" tab.*

Florida Reading Research Center <[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)>

*Description: Instructional materials for practitioners in Grades K – 5 available; information on progress monitoring and assessments.*

What Works Clearinghouse <<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>>

*Description: Practice guides on reading and mathematics interventions available under "Publications and Products" and reviews of the evidence based for published interventions.*

Best Evidence Encyclopedia <[www.bestevidence.org](http://www.bestevidence.org)>

*Description: Provides summaries about the evidence supporting educational programs for children Grades K – 12.*



## SECTION 5 - TIER III: INTENSIVE TARGETED INSTRUCTION

### TIER III

- **FOCUS:** Students failing to meet important benchmarks who have not responded to Tier I or Tier II efforts.
- **SETTING:** General education classrooms or other general education locations within a school.
- **INTERVENTIONS:** Supplemental intensive short-term interventions; teacher: student ratio up to 1:3.
- **INTERVENTIONISTS:** Specialists or other interventionists trained for Tier III intervention (including general educators with appropriate training).
- **ASSESSMENTS:** Very frequent progress monitoring (e.g., at least once per week).
- **DATA ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING:** Data review teams decide how to choose, individualize and intensify interventions for students receiving Tier III interventions.

### Focus

Tier III interventions are designed for students who show inadequate progress with Tier II interventions. Tier III interventions may include the intensification of interventions delivered in Tier II or different, more specialized interventions. Greater intensity of intervention can be achieved with a smaller teacher-student ratio (e.g., no more than one teacher to three students), more frequent intervention sessions (e.g., three-four times per week versus one-two times per week), and a longer duration of intervention session (e.g., an hour daily versus 30-45 minutes in Tier II). Different or more specialized interventions may be developed by addressing keystone behaviors associated with the target skill or adjusting the focus of the intervention to a different aspect of the skill (e.g., shifting from reading fluency to reading accuracy).

### Setting

Tier III interventions may be delivered within the general education classroom or other general education locations within a school.

### Interventionists

Implementing these kinds of intensive, individualized interventions requires an especially high degree of expertise on the part of the interventionist. Tier III interventionists may include general educators as well as specialists, but in either case, they require adequate training and preparation to implement Tier III interventions.

## **Interventions**

Like Tier II interventions, Tier III interventions are short term (e.g., eight to twenty weeks), supplemental to core classroom instruction, and remain part of the general education system. Furthermore, as in the case of Tier II, all Tier III interventions should be research based to the greatest extent possible. Tier III interventions should include highly explicit, systematic interventions closely targeting the needs of individual students at the student's current levels of functioning. Students exhibiting challenges who have not responded to Tier I and Tier II efforts also may require more comprehensive intervention plans, such as those involving school personnel's collaboration with other agencies and/or professional staff.

## **Assessments**

Tier III assessments include the same kinds of assessments found in Tier II. The data review team may consider additional diagnostic assessments to target the student's focus area for improvement and to select appropriate progress monitoring tools and observational measures. The primary difference between Tier II and Tier III assessments involves the frequency of progress monitoring during the intervention. For example, if students' progress is being monitored weekly, or every two weeks in Tier II, students receiving Tier III intervention might have progress monitored at least twice per week.

## **Data Analysis and Decision Making**

The data review team is also responsible for data analysis and decision making in Tier III. The team should decide how best to intensify or individualize interventions, how frequent progress monitoring should occur and how often that progress monitoring should be reviewed. Depending upon the skill targeted during intervention and the student need the team may decide to increase the frequency and review of progress monitoring data. In addition to increased intensity of interventions and more frequent review and decision making, all students receiving Tier III intervention should have a written intervention plan that includes the areas specified in the previous section.

If a student does not show adequate progress during or by the end of the intervention period (and the intervention was delivered with fidelity), the team may decide to use a different Tier III intervention with the student. At this point, analysis of the student's performance and social context should be particularly extensive and thorough, including observations of the intervention being implemented by another staff person or administrator, as well as additional diagnostic assessments if deemed appropriate. The following questions should be considered by the intervention team:

- Were the appropriate focus areas for improvement targeted?
- Have the appropriate interventions been tried in all three tiers?
- Have previous interventions been implemented with fidelity?
- How can Tier III interventions be changed to help the student achieve success?
- Is a comprehensive evaluation necessary?

It should be noted that individual students may function in different tiers for different domains at the same time. For example, a struggling reader may require Tier II or Tier III intervention in reading but

may require no additional support required in math. Furthermore, over time, students may move back and forth across tiers. For example, a struggling reader who initially responds well to Tier II instruction in phonics may eventually fall behind again in reading due to more comprehension-based difficulties and may need to receive Tier II or even Tier III intervention involving comprehension. Some fluidity of movement across tiers can be expected due to changing academic expectations and demands across grade levels. However, school and district personnel also should continually examine educational practices across all three tiers to ensure that these practices are adequate, and are not inadvertently contributing to some of the students' difficulties. In the end, the tiered process of remediation within RtI is simply that, a process of **general education** remediation, with the end goal of improving student functioning. This process, by no means, serves simply to result in special education placement, nor is it sufficient evidence on its own of a need for special education services. The Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma, 2007, contains the requirements for determining eligibility under IDEA 2004 for special education placement. When a specific learning disability is suspected, these policies and procedures require the collection of data regarding the differentiated instruction designed to increase the child's rate of learning in the general education setting gathered prior to or as part of the referral process. Data resulting from the delivery of research-based interventions delivered with fidelity in conjunction with continuous progress monitoring can then be used to assist in determining that a student's needs may be best met within the context of special education. However, when utilizing RtI data in this capacity it is always necessary to consult the Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma, 2007.

### **Tier III Resources**

#### Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma, 2007

National Center on Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>

*Description: Evidence-based tools and assessments on progress monitoring available under "Tools/Interventions" tab; for more information on the three-tiered model see "3-Tier Model" in Center's library.*

RTI Action Network <[www.rtinetwork.org/Essential/Assessment](http://www.rtinetwork.org/Essential/Assessment)>

*Description: Articles on progress monitoring and data-based decision making are available.*

Florida Reading Research Center <[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)>

*Description: Instructional materials for practitioners in Grades K – 5 available; information on progress monitoring and assessments.*

What Works Clearinghouse <<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>>

*Description: Practice guides on reading and mathematics Interventions available under "Publications and Products" and reviews of the evidence based for published interventions.*

Best Evidence Encyclopedia <[www.bestevidence.org](http://www.bestevidence.org)> *Description: Provides summaries about the evidence supporting educational programs for children Grades K – 12.*



## SECTION 6 - FAMILIES AND RTI

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Families play a critical role in supporting what their children are learning in school. Research shows that increased family involvement in student learning is associated with higher student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). It is important for school personnel to provide families with family-friendly information regarding RtI. School personnel must be committed to engaging families when concerns about a student's academic, social, or behavioral performance are first noted. Families should be provided with continuing information about their child's progress on assessments, as well as opportunities to participate in team meetings and decision making about their child's progress and in determining if a comprehensive evaluation for special education is warranted.

During the formal evaluation process to determine a specific learning disability, parents must receive data-based documentation which reflects the student's progress derived from the interventions. When a student is found to be eligible for special education, instruction or interventions that are highly focused on student's specific needs, as indicated in a student's individualized education program (IEP), continue to be progress monitored with documentation provided to families to demonstrate effectiveness.

### Families and RTI Resources

ABC's of RTI: Parent Guide to RTI

[http://www.rti4success.org/images/stories/topPicks/ABC\\_of\\_RTI.pdf](http://www.rti4success.org/images/stories/topPicks/ABC_of_RTI.pdf)

National Center on Response to Intervention <[www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org)>

*Description: Parent and family resources are available in the Center's library.*

RTI Action Network <[www.rtinetwork.org](http://www.rtinetwork.org)>

*Description: Listed under the "Parents and Families" tab, resources for parents and families include podcasts, parent briefs, Q&A with experts, and information on RtI and LD.*



## SECTION 7 - GLOSSARY OF RELATED TERMS

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**Aimline (goalline):** the straight line connecting a student's baseline level of performance with his or her long-range goal; the slope of the aimline shows the expected rate of improvement if the student is going to meet the long-range goal

**Accommodations:** Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities/504/ELL. Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability; they do not reduce learning expectations. Accommodations provide access to buildings, curriculum, and assessments.

**Alignment:** The degree to which assessments, curriculum, instruction, textbooks and other instructional materials, teacher preparation and professional development, and systems of accountability all reflect and reinforce the educational program's objectives and standards. One expects to see a clear linkage of the practices to the written documents from which they are drawn.

**Active Learning:** Any approach that focuses the responsibility of learning on the learner. Learners are engaged by matching instruction to the learner's interests, understanding and developmental level which often includes hands-on and authentic activities. It is a process of learning new ideas, skills, and attitudes by learning from doing, performing, and taking action. Examples of active learning include discovery learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning, and inquiry-based instruction, and may incorporate reciprocal teaching, high response rates, games, simulations, and role playing.

**Baseline Data:** Basic information on a student's current performance level, which is gathered before a program or intervention begins. It is the starting point to be used to compare a student's learning before a program or instruction begins.

**Benchmark:** A detailed description of a specific level of student performance expected of students at particular ages, grades, or developmental levels. Benchmarks are often represented by samples of student work. A set of benchmarks can be used as "checkpoints" to monitor progress toward meeting performance goals within and across grade levels (i.e., benchmarks for expected mathematics capabilities at grades three, seven, ten, and graduation).

**Benchmark Assessment:** The periodic assessment (a minimum of three times per year; early fall, mid-year, and late spring) of all students compared to age- or grade-level standards. This is also referred to as universal common assessment.

**Benchmark Assessment Data:** The data or results derived from the benchmark assessment or universal common assessment that indicates each student’s performance in relation to targeted critical skill areas.

**Comprehension:** The process of constructing meaning from written text. It includes such skills as: activating prior knowledge, literal understanding of what is read, sequencing, summarizing, making inferences, predicting, and making connections between new and unknown information.

**Core Curriculum:** The planned instruction in a content area, which is central and usually mandatory for all students of a school district. This is Tier I.

**Core Practices:** The planned instructional delivery methods in a content area, which is central for all students of a school district. This is Tier I.

**Culturally Responsive:** The ability to acknowledge the unique needs of diverse students, take action to address those needs, and adapt approaches as student needs and demographics change over time.

**Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM):** A set of standardized and validated short duration tests that are used by special education and general education teachers for the purpose of evaluating the effects of instructional programs in the basic skills of reading, mathematics computation, spelling, and written expression. CBMs may be locally developed, but generic CBMs are also available for free download or purchase (e.g., DIBELS or AIMSweb).

**Cut Point:** Cutoff scores on common benchmark assessments; cut points specify the score at or below which students would be considered for intervention.

**Data-Based Decision Making:** The use of student performance data to guide the design, implementation, and adjustment of instruction.

**Data Point:** An isolated piece of data on a graph or chart that illustrates a student’s performance or progress determined through a progress monitoring assessment.

**Data Review Teams:** Teams of educators responsible for data analysis and decision making and function at the level of the district, school, and grade (or content area) as well as across grade levels in the same content area (i.e., vertical teams); includes as members school administrators, school psychologists, grade/content area general educators, special education teachers, and various specialists and other behavioral/mental health personnel.

**Decision Rule:** A local system’s predetermined statement that defines the required score or level of progress on a specified assessment within a stated time period for deciding that additional (or reduced) intervention is necessary. For example, first grade students in X District who do not move to low risk on the DIBELS after 12 weeks of Tier II intervention (small group for 20 minutes 3 times per week) will begin Tier III.

**Diagnostic Assessments:** Additional assessments used both by general educators and specialists to clarify and target the needs of individual students when the information provided by other types of assessments, such as universal common assessments, is not sufficient or too broad.

**Differentiated Instruction:** An approach to teaching that emphasizes ways to meet the differing needs of a group of students within the general education setting, for example, through the use of flexible

small groups, varied instructional materials, or different ways of presenting the same content; differentiation of instruction is an integral part of Tier I.

**Early Intervening Services:** A set of coordinated services for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 (with particular emphasis on students in Kindergarten through Grade 3) who are not currently identified as needing special education or related services, but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in general education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows school districts to use up to 15 percent of their federal special education funds to develop and implement early intervening services, unless required based upon disproportionality.

**Evidence-Based Practice:** Evidence-based practices are educational practices and instructional strategies that are supported by scientific-research studies. It is the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction.

**Fidelity:** Refers to two attributes, accuracy and consistency, to which instruction, intervention, screening, progress monitoring and/or other practices are implemented in comparison to the original design or evidence-based process. Unless the instructional practice and curriculum is delivered with high fidelity, one cannot determine the basis of a student's learning or behavior difficulties.

**Five Critical Elements of Reading:** Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle/Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.

**Flexible Grouping:** Grouping of students that is changeable based on the purpose of the instructional activity and on changes in the instructional needs of individual students over time.

**Fluency:** The ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression and comprehension. The ability to automatically recognize conceptual connections, perform basic calculations, and apply appropriate problem solving strategies.

**Formative Assessment:** Ongoing assessment that is an integral part of instruction and is used to inform and guide teachers as they make instructional decisions. It is intended to guide and enhance the learning of all students.

**Instructional intervention:** Explicit and systematic instruction delivered by highly skilled teachers tailored to meet the identified needs of struggling students. This instruction is delivered in small groups.

**Intense intervention:** Explicit and systematic instruction delivered by highly skilled teacher specialists. This instruction is targeted and tailored to meet the needs of struggling students in small groups or one on one, with increased opportunities for practice and teacher feedback.

**Intervention:** Secondary supplements to the primary intervention of the core instruction. Within intervention students receive additional research-based instruction that is narrower in focus often delivered as short term in a small group or individualized setting.

**Performance Level Descriptors:** A verbal statement describing each performance level in terms of what the student has learned and can do. These statements are available for each state-mandated assessment for each content area and grade level where applicable.

**Performance Levels:** A range of scores that define a specific level of performance as articulated in the Performance Level Descriptors. Each student receives a scale score and a performance level designation (e.g., does not meet standard, meets standard, or exceeds standard) when assessed on a state-mandated assessment. The Performance Level and Performance Level Descriptors provide more meaning to the scale score.

**Performance Standards:** Performance standards provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction, and student work. They define the level of work that demonstrates achievement of the standards. Performance standards incorporate content standards, but expand upon them by providing suggested tasks, sample student work, and teacher commentary.

**Probe:** When using a Curriculum Based Measure (CBM), the instructor gives the student brief, timed samples, or "probes," comprised of academic material taken from the child's school curriculum. These CBM probes are given under standardized conditions. For example, the instructor will read the same directions every time that he or she gives a certain type of CBM probe. CBM probes are timed and may last from 1 to 5 minutes, depending on the skill being measured. The child's performance on a CBM probe is scored for speed, fluency, and for accuracy of performance. Since CBM probes are quick to administer and simple to score, they can be given repeatedly (for example, twice per week). The results are then charted to offer the instructor a visual record of a targeted child's rate of academic progress.

**Problem Solving Approach:** This approach focuses on a team making instructional decisions and the use of a variety of interventions to respond to student needs. Interventions are planned specifically for the targeted student based on that student's individual skill deficits or needs.

**Problem Solving Team:** A team of people, which may include school staff and parents, who use a problem-solving approach to address a problem or area of need for a student.

**Progress Monitoring:** Continuous measuring and comparing of student learning to determine progress toward targeted skills with the purpose of appropriately adjusting instruction.

**Research Based Intervention:** The methods, content, materials, etc., were developed in guidance from the collective research and scientific community.

**Response to Intervention:** Response to Intervention (RTI) is a practice of academic and behavioral interventions designed to provide early, effective assistance to underperforming students. Research-based interventions are implemented and frequent progress monitoring is conducted to assess student response and progress. When students do not make progress, increasingly more intense interventions are introduced.

**School Attachment:** A student's sense of belonging or feeling part of the school community through meaningful connections.

**Scientifically Based Research (SBR):** Research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to core academic development, instruction, and difficulties; and includes research that: (a) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; (b) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; (c) relies on measurements or observational

methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and (d) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. [Section 9101(37) of ESEA; 34 C.F.R. § 300.35]

**Slope:** The slope of the trendline is compared to that of the aimline to measure a student’s rate of improvement; if the slope of the trendline is less than that of the aimline, the student is not progressing at a rate sufficient enough to meet the goal in the time allotted.

**Screening:** A brief procedure used to identify a particular set of knowledge, skill, or ability gaps in students. The purpose of the screening could be related to academic, behavioral, or health such as vision or scoliosis screenings are conducted as brief measures to judge whether further assessment or referral is needed.

**Standard Protocol Approach:** This approach focuses on providing a specific research based intervention or treatment for students with similar difficulties in a standardized format. At each level of intervention consistent instructional methods are implemented for a specific length of time. The interventions are chosen from an approved list according to specific skill deficits.

**Tiered Instructional Delivery:** An approach for educational service delivery in which each tier represents an increased intensity of instructional and/or behavioral delivery that corresponds with a student’s needs. The implementation of this flexible interrelated instructional delivery approach provides a framework that includes appropriate curriculum, instruction and school organization that increases the likelihood of improved student achievement. Differentiation of instruction is critical to each of the tiers.

**Tier I:** The general education core curriculums, instruction and social/behavioral supports for all students with differentiation of instruction as a norm.

**Tier II:** Short-term interventions for students who have not responded adequately to the general education core curriculums and differentiation of instruction; it is part of the general education system.

**Tier III:** More intensive or individualized short-term interventions for students who fail to respond adequately to Tier I and/or Tier II interventions; it is also part of the general education system.

**Trend:** The response of a student undergoing intervention; if the intervention is effective, the trend will show improvement toward the student’s long-range goal, whereas if the intervention is ineffective, the trend will show no improvement toward the goal or even worsening of performance (further away from the goal).

**Trendline:** The single line of best fit when the student’s successive scores during intervention are plotted on a graph; the slope of the trendline shows the student’s rate of improvement.

**Universal Common Assessment:** A brief assessment or screening of all students in a grade level that focuses on critical target skills that is highly predictive of future outcomes. Students identified as “at risk” may need closer monitoring, interventions, or more in-depth assessment. Universal common assessments, if administered at regular intervals throughout the year, would enable the ongoing evaluation of a student’s performance relative to his/her peers in the mastery of grade level expectations.

**Universal Common Assessment Data:** The data or results derived from the universal common assessment or benchmark assessment that indicates each student's performance in relation to targeted critical skill areas.



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