

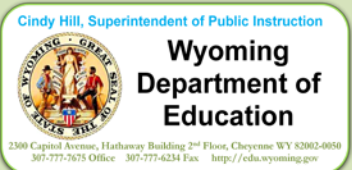
All children  
**can learn when provided**  
**with effective curriculum,**  
**instruction and learning**  
**conditions.**

## A Model Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework to Identify Students with Specific Learning Disabilities



**Developed by**  
**The Wyoming Department of Education,**  
in collaboration with **Wyoming Stakeholders,**  
**The National Center on RtI,**  
**Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, and**  
**Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center**

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## Table of Contents

Purpose and Organization.....	3
Introduction .....	4
Legislative Context of RtI .....	4
Underlying Beliefs of RtI.....	5
An Overview of Wyoming’s RtI Framework.....	6
The Leadership Imperative.....	9
Implementation .....	9
Consensus and Commitment .....	10
Alignment of Initiatives .....	11
Capacity Building .....	11
Resources.....	12
Fidelity .....	12
Multiple Sources of Data for Problem Solving .....	13
Applying the Critical Features to Multi-Level Tiered 1 Instruction.....	14
Overview of the Critical Features.....	14
A Scientific, Research-based Core Curriculum.....	14
Explicit and Systematic Instruction.....	14
Differentiated Instruction .....	15
Student Engagement and Motivation.....	16
Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness .....	17
Tier 1 (Classroom or Universal Level).....	19
Assessment that Informs Instruction .....	19
Problem Solving Teams.....	19
The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students.....	20
Parent and Family Involvement .....	21
Tier 2 (Strategic or Supplemental Level) .....	23
Tier 2 Interventions .....	23
Assessment that Informs Instruction.....	23
The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students .....	25
Parent and Family Involvement.....	25
Tier 3 (Intensive or Individualize).....	25
Tier 3 Interventions .....	25
Assessment that Informs Instruction.....	25
The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students .....	25
Parent and Family Involvement.....	29
Summary of Instruction, Assessment and Parent/Family Involvement .....	30
Expected Outcomes .....	31

## Purpose and Organization

The purpose of this document is to establish a common language and understanding about the Wyoming RtI Framework for schools, districts and other stakeholders. The RtI procedures and practices are offered as guidance that is descriptive but not prescriptive. Schools can individualize this flexible framework based on contextual factors, such as student outcome data, demographics, resources, and staffing patterns.

The document consists of three parts: the Conceptual Framework of RtI in Wyoming, an Appendix with resources, and Toolkit of sample process and procedure tools. This is a “living document” and will be updated as new research and information becomes available. While the document describes best practices of a well-implemented RtI model, it is not a manual or a checklist for implementation.

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) provides professional development to school leadership teams through the Wyoming System of Instructional Supports (WySIS). The tiered logic models of RtI and PBIS are braided into a comprehensive, school-wide system of prevention and intervention. WySIS professional development addresses the critical features of RtI and PBIS and supports a school’s implementation through a coaching model. The expected outcome of implementation of RtI and PBIS with fidelity is an improvement in student achievement proficiency data.

This document was developed as a collaborative effort between WDE consultants representing Early Literacy, District Support and Coordination, Professional Learning Communities, and Wyoming System of Instructional Supports (Integrating RtI and PBIS), National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, and Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center. The process involved a review of other states’ RtI frameworks, related WDE documents and stakeholder input.

## Introduction

### Legislative Context of RtI

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 provide support for the assessment and instructional practices of RtI:

- The expectations that educational outcomes for all students will improve, especially the lowest-achieving, English Language Learners and student with disabilities
- The provision of early intervention services for students before they are identified as needing special education
- The integration of instruction and assessment
- The use of research-based instruction, interventions and practices
- Meaningful parent and family involvement
- A focus on school-wide systems
- A systematic, job-embedded approach to professional development

Although the term “response to scientific research based intervention” appears in IDEA as an evaluation approach for specific learning disability, implementation in general education is a prerequisite. RtI is not a special education initiative. It is a general education framework for providing instruction that is matched to student need.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is defined as the integration of “assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RtI, schools use data to 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 or other disabilities.” (National Center on Response to Intervention))

This document is designed to describe a systems approach to school improvement acknowledging the role of RtI in promoting academic and behavioral success for all students, including those with disabilities. It describes the critical features, considerations, and best practices of a well-implemented RtI model.

## Underlying Beliefs of RtI

- All children can learn when provided with effective curriculum, instruction and learning conditions.
- Student learning determines if the instruction has been effective.
- Scientific- or evidence-based research is a filter to guide instructional practices.
- Explicit, systematic instruction in specific skills increases student learning.
- Intervention is more successful before a cycle of academic failure is established.
- A strong relationship exists between academics and behavior.
- Instructional decision making is based on integrating multiple sources of data, including universal screening and progress monitoring.
- Teachers are provided ongoing, job-embedded professional development.
- Learning is enhanced when schools and families engage in meaningful collaboration.
- A well-defined structure is necessary for sustainable implementation.

## An Overview of Wyoming's RtI Framework

The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) proposes four essential components of RtI:

- A school-wide, multi-level instructional and behavioral system for preventing school failure
- Screening of all students to determine who is at risk for poor learning outcomes
- Progress monitoring during instruction
- Data-based decision making for instruction, movement with the multi-level system and identification of students with learning disabilities (in accordance with Wyoming Chapter 7 Rules)

Wyoming's RtI Framework includes three additional components necessary for sustainable implementation: a collaborative problem-solving process, instructional leadership and parent/family involvement.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a related initiative, applies the critical features of RtI to a school-wide prevention and intervention framework for social skills and behavior. Behavior and academics are strongly related. When students experience academic success, behavior problems decrease. Conversely, when there are fewer behavioral incidences, academic achievement improves. The assumption of this document is that the RtI framework can be effectively applied to address academic achievement and behavioral issues.

A brief overview of the critical features of Wyoming's RtI Framework is provided below. These features are not listed in priority order. They are interdependent and are all essential for the implementation of a sustainable system-wide framework.

### 1. A multi-level instructional and behavioral system to prevent school failure

RtI is a systematic instructional approach that uses scientific- and evidence-based curricula, strategies and practices matched to student needs. There are multiple levels (typically three) of instructional and behavioral supports that are provided through a continuum of increasingly intensive interventions. The underlying philosophy of RtI is to expand a school's capacity for effectively teaching diverse learners before there is a significant achievement gap.

- Tier 1 (Classroom or Universal level), Classroom instruction is delivered with fidelity and results in 80-85% of students learning the grade level content. A similar percentage of students will have improved social competence, motivation

and academic engagement when provided with a comprehensive, school-wide system that teaches positive and expected behaviors.

- Tier 2 (Strategic or Supplemental level), Students who fail to achieve adequately with tier 1 instruction are provided targeted instruction, in addition to classroom instruction, to remediate skill deficits or behavioral challenges.
- Tier 3 (Intensive level), Students who do not make adequate progress with strategic interventions receive intensive instruction, that may be individualized. Instruction at Tier 3 may be in addition to the core curriculum or a replacement core curriculum.

## 2. Multiple sources of data for problem solving

Assessments must align to the curriculum, meet the technical adequacy standards of reliability and validity and provide data to inform instructional decision making that can be matched to student need. There are four primary purposes for assessment of academic and behavioral skills in the RtI framework: to determine the effectiveness of the school, grade and classroom curriculum and instruction; compare student learning to grade level benchmark targets; to determine if students are making progress during instruction; and to identify specific student skill deficits.

The following table describes and compares these four types of assessments, which include outcome, universal screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic.

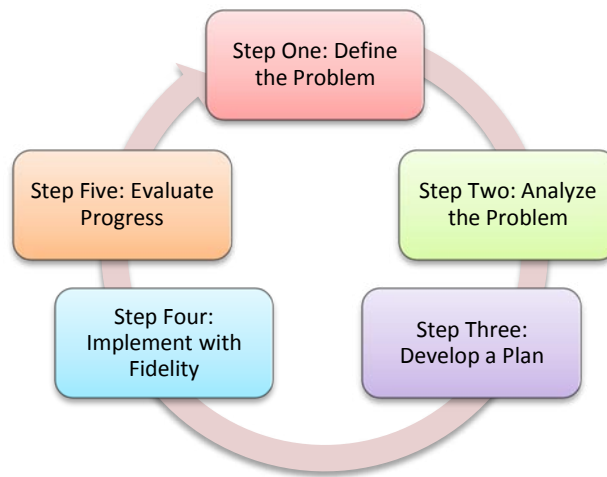
	Description	Purpose	Frequency	Examples
<b>Outcome</b>	Aligned with state standards, broad index scores, summative assessment	To evaluate the effectiveness of school, grade and classroom curriculum and instruction	Yearly or two to three times a year	PAWS, NWEA MAP*
<b>Universal Screening</b>	School-wide, formative assessment	To Determine who is at or above grade level benchmark targets and requires attention	Two to three times a year	DIBELS, NWEA MAP*, AIMSweb
<b>Progress Monitoring</b>	Brief, formative assessments of specific skills or behavioral targets of small groups or individual students	To Determine if students are making adequate progress or responding to instruction	Frequency determined by intensity of instruction (monthly or weekly)	DIBELS, AIMSweb, CBM, Office Discipline Referrals (ODR)
<b>Diagnostic</b>	Targeted, individual student assessment of specific domains, skills or abilities	To Identify specific deficits for intervention	Yearly or as needed	Gray Oral Reading Test, ERDA

*Adapted from Johnson, E., Mellard, D.F., Fuchs, D. & McKnight, M.A. (2006) and Washington State Diagnostic Assessment Guide (2009)*

\*NWEA MAP is used as both an “interim measurement” of learning outcomes and a universal screening to determine student mastery of the grade level standards and benchmarks.

### 3. A collaborative problem-solving process that integrates assessment and instruction

The problem-solving process is a critical feature of RtI that supports the underlying belief that responsibility for student learning is shared. It is a highly structured, data based model that can be useful for decision making at all levels of the system – district, school, class, instructional groups and individual students. The steps of the problem solving process require a clear definition of the problem, an analysis of potential causes, development of a plan, the implementation of the plan with fidelity, and evaluation to determine progress and next steps.



### 4. Strong instructional leadership to facilitate implementation and sustainability

Leadership is a key factor for the initial implementation and continued success of the RtI framework. To create a culture of shared responsibility for student outcomes, both building and district leadership teams, composed of representatives from general and special education, should be established. These teams should serve as a catalyst for implementation and sustainability, professional development, and fidelity of implementation at the district, school, class, and individual student level.

### 5. Parental/family involvement

RtI represents a significant change in educational practice that calls for a corresponding change in school, parent and family partnerships. As students receive increasingly intense instruction, the frequency of parental communication and involvement in the problem solving process should also increase. When the two main socializing influences in a child’s life, home and school, work together within the RtI framework, the problem-solving process becomes more effective.



*A leader is a person you would follow to a place you would not go yourself (Barker, 1992).*

## The Leadership Imperative

Leadership that can manage complex change at the school level is a fundamental requirement for the successful implementation and sustainability of RtI. No silver bullets, quick fixes, interventions or strategies will instantly provide better student results. Leadership must understand the magnitude, complexity, and commitment for the required systems change.

## Implementation

Implementing an innovation such as RtI is a major undertaking. Rogers (1983) defines an innovation as an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or organization. The “Diffusion of Innovations Theory” provides information about how, why, and at what rate innovations are adopted. The rate of adoption is determined by the characteristics of the innovation, communication channels, the time dimension, and the social system of the organization. The rate of adoption is dependent on the length of time for a critical mass to adopt the innovation.

The implementation research of Fixsen and Blasé (2007) concludes that the organizational change process required to implement RtI can take two to four years. To achieve improved outcomes for students, both effective interventions and effective implementation must be present (Fixsen & Blasé, 2007).

Fixsen & Blasé have identified six stages of implementation. They are recursive, not linear or hierarchical stages. Unique factors in a school (i.e., high levels of staff turnover) can create the need to move to a previous stage. The stages of implementation as defined by Fixsen, Blasé, Horner, Sugai (2009) are as follows:

1. Exploration: Identifying the need for change, learning about possible interventions that may be solutions, learning about what it takes to implement the innovation effectively, developing stakeholders and champions, deciding to proceed
2. Installation: Establishing the resources needed to use an innovation and resources required to implement the innovation with fidelity and good outcomes for students
3. Initial Implementation: The first use of intervention practices by newly trained teachers and others working in a school and district environment that is just learning how to support the new ways of teaching (sometimes referred to as the awkward stage)
4. Full Implementation: The skillful use of an innovation well-integrated into the repertoire of teachers and routinely supported by building and district administrators
5. Innovation: the advances in knowledge and skill that come from evaluated changes in how teachers and others make use of a science-based intervention

6. Sustainability: Persistent and skillful support for teachers and staff who are using an innovation effectively, with each cohort of teachers achieving better results than the last. This is sometimes referred to as “regeneration” defined as “the set of procedures that allow a system to continually compare valued outcomes against current practice and modify practices to continue to achieve valued outcomes as the context changes over time”.

## Consensus and Commitment

If initiatives are implemented without establishing a shared commitment and consensus of staff, the school improvement process can become an attempt-attack-abandon cycle. A proactive leader recognizes that RtI is an adaptive and complex change process that challenges staff habits, beliefs and values. There are various tools and models included in the Toolkit (i.e., Concerns-based Adoption Model [Hall & Loucks], *Managing Complex Change* [Knoster] and *Formula for RtI Success* [W. Tilly] to guide leaders through the management of the change process.

Gaining consensus that the school’s mission is to improve the learning outcomes for all students creates a willingness to examine practices in light of their impact on learning (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2002). RtI has been described as an approach for redesigning and establishing teaching and learning environments that are effective, efficient, relevant and durable for all students, families and educators. The focus shifts from “what’s wrong with this child” to “what positive and preventive supports we provide to help this child be successful?”. The RtI framework emphasizes that a problem is no longer within the student but an indication that the system is not responsive to the needs of all students.

An effective way to share the responsibility of consensus building and commitment to RtI is to establish a building leadership team. The team’s membership should include the building administrator and staff with expertise in data analysis, content expertise, behavior, and instructional coaching. A consideration for the composition of the team is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members represent general education and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  represent special education.

*Continuous learning depends on developing many leaders in the school in order to enhance continuity (Fullan, 2008).*

A good first step to implementation is to assess the degree to which the supports, infrastructure and features of RtI already exist. A self-assessment survey of all building instructional staff provides this baseline information. A copy of the Wyoming self-assessment survey is included in the Toolkit. Additional sources for self-assessments are included in the Appendix.

*It is not the pace of change that is the culprit, it is the piecemealness and fragmentation that wears us down (Fullan, 2003).*

## Alignment of Initiatives

Systems alignment is an essential ingredient for a continuous school improvement model. Several initiatives, frameworks and models are part of the Wyoming schools' continuum of learning supports (e.g., RtI, PBIS, PLC, Early Literacy, What Works in Schools [Marzano], AdvanceEd Accreditation, Organizational Assessment, Ten Steps to Doubling Performance [Picus & Odden]). The graphic, *"Integrated System Elements"* included in the Toolkit provides a crosswalk of the key concepts of some of these initiatives, frameworks and models.

Schools would benefit from completing a similar cross-walk analysis. The analyses should begin with a clear articulation of the school's vision, mission and goals. Initiatives, frameworks and building teams can be matched for purpose, alignment, or overlap to determine what needs to be continued, consolidated or eliminated. RtI should be conceptualized as a coherent framework that integrates curriculum and assessment. Schools that develop a clear definition of RtI create shared ownership and common ground among stakeholders (Implementing Response to Intervention: Practices and Perspectives from Five Schools, Center on Instruction, 2009).

## Capacity Building

Capacity building is defined as increasing the competencies, resources and motivation of individuals and groups of people to get important things done (Fullan, 2008). A school culture that fosters relationships, collaboration, shared decision making, instructional coaching, mentoring, and ongoing professional development builds the capacity of the instructional staff and the school to improve student outcomes.

Ample evidence exists that "one-shot" in-services and professional development trainings rarely improve skills and practices of teachers. The 2006 Wyoming State Legislature provided additional funding to establish "Instructional Facilitators/Coaches" to provide job-embedded professional development. Instructional Facilitators are a valuable leadership asset to support teachers in the day-to-day practices and strategies that lead to full implementation of RtI.

Systems, resources, and competence are needed to maintain effects, support high fidelity of implementation, expand applications, and sustain implementation (Sugai, 2007).

## Resources

The implementation of RtI requires “a different way of doing business” (Batsche, 2006). RtI cannot be viewed as an add-on or afterthought. The successful implementation of RtI requires an examination of current practices and a reallocation of resources:

- Scheduling time for universal screening, team meetings progress monitoring, professional development, core instruction, interventions, etc. (Hilt-Panahon & Gischlar, 2010)
- Staff instructional duties
- Funding sources
- Physical space for instruction

*Those who do well and those who do not all have the same amount of time in which to do so (National Reading Technical Assistance Center).*

## Fidelity

Fidelity of implementation is defined as “how closely the prescribed procedures of a process are followed” (Mellard & Johnson, 2007). Assuring fidelity is not as simple as completing a checklist or an observation of instruction. Fidelity is an integral part of every feature of RtI rather than a separate component. Schools need to self-assess at the surface (climate) level of the system (i.e., vision, mission, goals, infrastructure, etc.) and at a deeper (culture) level (i.e., values, beliefs, norms, leadership, etc.). Schools also need to assess instructional and assessment fidelity at the classroom level to assure adherence to the research-based design of the intervention and assessment.

At the school level, RtI implementation with fidelity has these components:

- An assessment system that provides information about students’ risk status
- An assessment system that provides information about students’ progress during instruction
- Curriculum, interventions and strategies that are evidence-based
- A horizontal and vertical alignment across tiers and grade levels
- Clear communication and feedback with staff about goals, roles, and responsibilities
- Fidelity checks that are routinely scheduled and analyzed with staff to improve implementation and instruction
- Practices that are aligned and integrated to promote sustainability

- Policies, procedures, practices, and a common vocabulary that are agreed-upon and documented

*(Source: National Center on Response to Intervention, Mellard)*

An RtI Template for Districts/Schools that was adapted from the IRIS Center Module:

*Considerations for School Leaders* is included in the Toolkit.

*We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2002).*

## Multiple Sources of Data for Problem Solving

To apply RtI effectively, school leaders begin the problem-solving process at the system level (district, school, grade and class) before developing individual student learning plans or interventions. The magnitude and definition of the problem will provide valuable information regarding required resources and the scale of the necessary school-wide improvement. Examples of problem identification and analysis at system levels:

- District level: The percentage of students (aggregated or sub-groups) meeting proficiency on the state standards as measured by the statewide assessment in reading is below the state average. Is the Tier 1 Core curriculum effective?
- School level: The percentage of students who are at benchmark on the fall, winter and spring screening assessment is not increasing. Who are the students? Do the data suggest a sub-group? Has their risk level increased (benchmark to strategic or strategic to intensive)? Is a clear pattern of skill deficits evident?
- Grade level: Students in certain grades are not making adequate progress. Has the staff been provided adequate professional development and training on the curriculum? Has fidelity of implementation been addressed? Can root causes be identified?
- Class or group level: Instructional groups are not making growth at the expected rate. Are the interventions matched to student needs?
- Student level: The student is not making the same amount of progress as other students in the instructional group. What skills has the student not mastered? Has a diagnostic assessment been administered?

The two most common reasons for less than expected rate of student progress are a mismatch between instruction and learner needs and fidelity of implementation. If the data show that the core curriculum is not adequately meeting the needs for most students, an action plan should be developed to address the needs and patterns that

emerge. Measures of fidelity that determine whether the curriculum is implemented as the developers intended should also occur at this point.

## Applying the Critical Features of RtI to Multi-level Tiered Instruction

### Overview of the Critical Features

All tier levels (core, strategic, and intensive) should promote the following instructional practices

- Scientific, research based curriculum and/or strategies
- Explicit and systematic instruction
- Differentiated instruction
- Student engagement motivation
- Cultural and linguistic responsiveness

### Scientific Research-based Curriculum

The term Scientific, Research-based is defined in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) to mean research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs. Scientific Research-based Curriculum has met these rigorous standards and has been validated to improve outcomes for students. Curricula can target all areas of foundational skills and/or be specific to a particular foundational skill depending on the instructional needs of the student. The Toolkit provides additional information and resources to review and select scientific, research-based curriculum.

### Explicit and Systematic Instruction

“Explicit instruction...does not leave anything to chance, and does not make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children acquire on their own” (Torgesen, 2004). Academic failure can often be attributed to the erroneous assumption that all students know how to complete a task without explicit lessons. More than any other factor, explicit instruction is essential to student achievement. Research supports that skills, processes, strategies, and content must be explicitly and systematically taught. They must be modeled and practiced in multiple settings with a variety of materials. A gradual withdrawal of teacher support must follow until the student achieves the desired level of automaticity and is independent. Outstanding and effective teachers understand the following sequential components of explicit instruction:

- **Direct Explanation** tells why the skill or strategy is important and when it is used (e.g., the teacher names and defines the skill, process, content, or strategy to be learned).

- **Teacher modeling** overtly demonstrates a skill, process, content or strategy. Modeling provides concrete examples for students and a greater likelihood for mastery.
- **Guided Practice** allows students to practice the skill or strategy independently or in small groups, prompts, specific corrective feedback and praise are provided. Teacher support gradually fades as the student takes responsibility for using the skill, process, or strategy independently.
- **Independent Practice** provides students with multiple opportunities to apply the newly acquired skill, process, content or strategy on their own. Students can continue to review and practice as necessary.
- **Formative Assessment** evaluates the mastery of the new skill, process, content, or strategy. It allows the teacher to design future instruction to target skills, process, content, and strategies that in turn require additional review and instruction.

### Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction is teaching with student variance in mind. It means starting where the kids are, rather than adopting a standardized approach to teaching that seems to presume that all learners of a given age or grade are essentially alike. Thus, differentiated instruction is “responsive” teaching rather than “one-size-fits-all” teaching. Emphasis on differentiation is particularly important in Tier 1 instruction as instruction in Tier 2 and Tier 3 has become more differentiated.

Differentiated Instruction is essential to meet the needs of all learners and necessitates thoughtful planning of instructional tasks. Alterable variables of instruction such as frequency of instruction, opportunities for response, grouping, pacing and instructional alignment should be considered. Classroom teachers must be clear about what they are trying to teach and why it is relevant to student achievement.

Examples of Differentiated Instruction include:

- **Flexible grouping** is used to narrow the instructional range of a group of students. Groups are initially identified through universal screening and refined further as a result of data from diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring. “Walk to Read” is an example of school-wide flexible grouping that increases a school’s capacity to meet the needs of all students.
- **Accommodations** are provided to allow students to gain access to content and/or complete tasks by altering the environment, changing the instructional format, or providing technology. Since accommodations do not alter the content that is taught, the expectation is that students will master grade level skills.

Examples of accommodations:

- Alternate textbooks
- Computer use
- Appropriate reading level

Accommodations should not be confused with *modifications*. An accommodation is a change in the way student demonstrates mastery (e.g., orally vs. written). A modification is a change in what the student is expected to master (e.g., grade level content). An accommodation provides access to knowledge and skills but the student is still expected to master grade level standards.

Learning activities or strategies provide appropriate methods for students to explore the concepts. *Marzano's "Essential Nine"* instructional strategies are examples of research based strategies that are likely to improve student achievement:

1. Identifying similarities and differences
2. Summarizing and note taking
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
4. Homework and practice
5. Nonlinguistic representations
6. Cooperative learning
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
8. Generating and testing hypotheses
9. Cues, questions, and advance organizers

### **Student Engagement and Motivation**

Student engagement and motivation are related concepts that are fundamental to increasing achievement for all students, including struggling and advanced learners. The factors that impact student engagement are 1) student variables of interest, motivation, skill level, 2) social variables of peer and adult relationships, and 3) instructional variables (Feldman, 2010). The careful structuring of lesson content, grouping, support and varied strategies (such as *Marzano's "Essential Nine"*) for active classroom participation can attract and maintain students' interest and involvement.

Instructional strategies that increase engagement:

- Explicit instruction
- Increased opportunities for response (choral, partner, written, individual)
- Peer-assisted learning
- Structured thinking and partner rehearsal



*\*Additional information included in the Toolkit*

About 15% of students who fail to achieve benchmark skills have a motivation factor. In order to determine whether motivation is a factor for students who are not at benchmark, the universal screening might include a brief “can’t do/won’t do” assessment (STEEP, Witt and Vanderheyden). This assessment assumes two explanations for not achieving: skill (can’t do) or motivation (won’t do). To test these hypotheses, a screening is repeated and an incentive is offered to the student for improving the scores. The results are compared to determine whether there is a need for a skill or motivation intervention.

Strategies to increase motivation:

- Use reinforcers
- Provide recognition and positive support
- Involve students in goal setting
- Involve student in charts of progress
- Use two way communication with parents and families

### **Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness**

RtI has the potential to improve outcomes for students who have diverse cultural, socioeconomic or language acquisition needs and reduce their disproportionate representation in special education. Unless the implications of these factors are intentionally addressed, the classroom behavior and performance of these students might be erroneously attributed to learning or behavior deficits. Behaviors commonly associated with learning problems (e.g., inattentiveness, distractibility, or disorganization) might be due to a lack of educational opportunity, poor language comprehension or cultural norms.

Universal screening and progress monitoring assessments might reveal uneven skill acquisition and misrepresent a student’s strengths and needs. Instructional variables within the general education classroom should be observed and used to inform decisions about the need for additional interventions or supports.

Examples of effective instructional strategies for students with diverse needs:

- Explicitly teach culturally-specific words, concepts and idioms
- Provide focus questions prior to instruction
- Use cooperative, interactive learning activities
- Allow additional time for students to process verbal information
- Ask students to paraphrase information
- Connect new instruction to the student’s prior knowledge

- Use graphic organizers
- Promote interest and motivation in culturally appropriate ways

Epstein's Framework of *Six Types of Involvement* provides these strategies to strengthen the trust and respect for families of different cultures, abilities and experiences:

- Provide information to all families, not just those who attend workshops or meetings at the school
- Encourage parents to share information with schools about culture, background, children's strengths and needs
- Make sure all information for families is clear, usable, and linked to children's needs and strengths
- Make sure all communication, both print and non-print, is clear and frequent and translated to parents' first language, if necessary
- Continually review quality of major communications (newsletter, report cards, conference schedules, etc.)
- Recruit parent volunteers so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome
- Make flexible schedules for all events to enable working parents to participate
- Organize volunteers, provide training, match time and talent with student needs, and recognize efforts to ensure productivity of participants
- Design family-linked homework activities
- Involve families and their children in curriculum-related decisions

## **Tier 1 (Classroom or Universal Level)**

Core curriculum refers to what all students are taught and expected to learn at the universal level. The assumption is that all students receive Tier 1 Instruction and/or instruction aligned with the core curriculum. The core curriculum is based on the enduring understandings and essential questions of the content. A core curriculum is scientifically research-based and validated. Research involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.

### **Assessment that Informs Instruction**

The importance of a high quality curriculum and evidence-based instructional practices is often under-estimated. An analysis of the effectiveness of the core curriculum is essential prior to the implementation of tiered interventions. Multiple sources of data can include the statewide assessment (PAWS), interim outcome measures (e.g., NWEA MAP), universal screening assessments, progress monitoring and/or district common assessments. A commonly used standard to determine the adequacy of the core curriculum is 80% of students are at benchmark (or proficient) on assessments.

It is important that the school staff assume an active role in the assessment of student performance. On-going professional development in the selection and administration of assessment and data analysis facilitates the use of assessment data to make instructional decisions. Many schools have formal “data retreats” to triangulate data and to develop action plans. A data management system is an important component of the infrastructure to organize, track and disseminate data in an understandable format.

### **Problem-solving Teams**

Schools may have existing problem solving teams (Building Intervention Team, At-Risk team, grade level teams, content teams, literacy teams, data teams, Professional Learning Communities) that use the problem-solving process. If the purposes of these teams align, the teams can be integrated into a single problem-solving team whose purpose is to make instructional decisions and to develop action plans based on a rigorous review of data.

The team membership should be determined at the school level to appropriately address unique needs related to school size and configuration of demographics. It is helpful to have representation from staff that has the expertise to address specific student academic and behavioral concerns. Membership can include general and special education teachers, a school psychologist, a speech/language pathologist, a behavior specialist, an ELL teacher, OT/PT, a nurse, an instructional facilitator, administrators and parents. The core members of the team should meet regularly and for an adequate length of time to make the required decisions. Providing time for

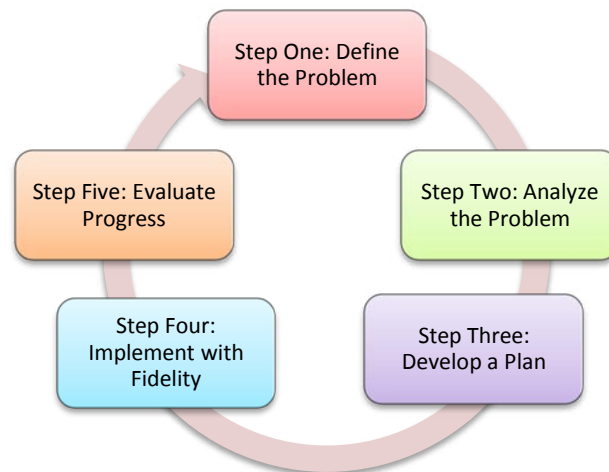
regular collaboration and planning might require a re-configuration of the school schedule.

The team process needs to be encouraging, supportive, and focused on meetings the needs of students. Team meetings are more efficient and effective if group norms and the roles of facilitator, recorder, time-keeper and case manager are defined. Examples of team member roles include:

- Facilitator: keep meetings focused, maintain collaborative atmosphere, and resolve conflicts
- Recorder: complete intervention plans and record meeting minutes
- Timekeeper: monitors time limits
- Case manager: supports teachers in defining the problem, collecting data, and communicating with parents.

### The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students

This process has a structured format to clearly define and articulate a student’s learning or behavioral needs, analyze data and other information, develop and implement interventions with fidelity, and examine data to determine student progress.



The steps of the problem-solving process for students and guiding questions include the following:

#### Step One: Define the Problem

- What is the skill or behavior that can be changed through instruction?
- What observable, measurable indicators exist about current performance?
- Is it a problem for this student, a small group of students, or a class or school-wide problem?
- What is the gap between student data and the benchmark target?

## Step Two: Analyze the Problem

- Why is it happening?
- Is it a problem for the whole class, a small group, or an individual student?
- What other information do we need?

## Step Three: Develop a Plan

- What intervention should be used?
- What is the measurable goal?
- Who will implement the intervention?
- Where will the intervention be provided?
- What is the timeline: number of days per week, number of weeks, minutes per day?
- What is the group size?
- What will be used to monitor progress and how often?
- What decision rules will determine adequate progress?

## Step Four: Implement with Fidelity?

- How will fidelity of implementation be determined?
- Who will provide the documentation?
- What supports are necessary?

## Step Five: Evaluate the Progress

- Did the student meet the goal?
- What is the learning or improvement rate?
- Is the slope of data points likely to close the gap to benchmark skills?
- Does the intervention need to be modified?
- Are there students who need to receive a more intensive intervention?
- Does the group size need to be reduced?
- Does the time or frequency need to be increased?

## **Parent and Family Involvement**

Parent and family involvement is an important factor in improving student achievement and is a key aspect of a successful RtI framework. Parents provide a unique perspective about the student's skills, strengths and challenges.

Written information about the RtI framework should clearly explain that the framework emphasizes the vital collaborative role of parents and families. It must also be clearly communicated that RtI is not intended to delay referral for special education services but addresses students' needs in order to prevent a widening learning gap.

Examples of ways to engage parents in the RtI process:

- Provide an RtI overview at “back at school” nights, PTA, or other parent group meetings
- Develop or use print materials (brochures, etc.) or articles in the school newsletter that explain RtI in parent-friendly language
- Post information about RtI on the school’s website
- Conduct “mini” presentations at events throughout the year to highlight specific components such as reading or progress monitoring charts
- Include discussions of student data in all parent conferences
- Develop written parent reports and graphs to report data

## Tier 2 (Strategic or Supplemental Level)

Students with universal screening or behavioral assessment scores that fall below (or significantly exceed) a cut score that has been pre-determined by the district or school should be considered for Tier 2 interventions. Tier 2 interventions are supplemental to and aligned with the core curriculum. Instruction is provided in small groups with students who have similar instructional needs.

### Tier 2 Interventions

The selection of interventions for students at Tier 2 is based on these criteria:

- A match between student needs and skills targeted by the intervention
- Research or evidence that the instructional or behavioral intervention is effective.

A “standard protocol” that matches a specific set of available research-based interventions to student needs is commonly used (e.g., a fluency intervention for low Oral Reading Fluency scores). This process is efficient and does not delay interventions until a problem-solving team has met. These interventions typically have a protocol that specifies the delivery of instruction, frequency, and the length of sessions. In order to make a valid and reliable determination of student progress, adherence to the guidelines and protocols that resulted in evidence of effectiveness is critical.

Behavioral interventions are implemented systematically with students (individually or small groups) and include strategies such as daily report cards, mentoring programs, check-in/check-out systems, behavior contracting, social skills instruction, and/or school counseling.

### Assessment that Informs Instruction

**Progress monitoring** is a brief, frequent, ongoing assessment that provides objective data to determine if students are responding well to an intervention. Progress monitoring tools are designed primarily for academic areas. The research and best practices suggest three methods to monitor social skills and problem behaviors: systematic direct observation, direct behavior rating scales and office discipline referrals (ODR).

The National Center of Response to Intervention (NCRTI), [www.RtI4success.org](http://www.RtI4success.org), provides an annual review of progress monitoring tools that are submitted voluntarily by vendors.

**Curriculum based measurement (CBM)** is an effective progress monitoring tool to assess performance and growth of specific skills during an intervention. The tools selected must meet the technical adequacy standards of reliability, validity and have alternate forms for repeated assessments. The data from CBMs are used to estimate

rates of improvement, determine adequate progress, and assist with the decision to continue, modify, stop or begin a different intervention. Students at Tier 2 are typically monitored monthly or twice a month. Sufficient data should be gathered to reliably determine progress.

The school staff should assume an active role in the assessment and analysis of student performance data. They need to develop expertise in developing, selecting and using a variety of assessments that are reliable and valid. In order to make valid comparisons of growth over time, assessment fidelity (implementation in a consistent and standardized way) is required. The school staff must receive ongoing professional development in the administration, scoring and interpretation of the assessment data. Fidelity checks can be done through the use of checklists, observation, and random checking for accuracy. Periodic retraining should occur as needed.

Decision rules or criteria for determining the appropriate levels or response (or non-response) to interventions should be determined and should include the following:

- **Cut scores** (benchmarks) that determine if a student continues to need the same Tier 2 intervention, a different Tier 2 intervention, a Tier 3 intervention or should return to Tier 1.
- **Frequency and duration of progress monitoring** during Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Data must be collected frequently enough to detect changes during the intervention. The duration of progress monitoring should be long enough to reliably determine student response (e.g., 8-10 weeks).
- **Criteria for determining a student's responsiveness to intervention** based on student's performance level (e.g., reading at the 12<sup>th</sup> %ile) and/or the slope or trend line of progress monitoring data points (e.g., improving reading fluency at rate of 3 words per minute over a set length of time).
- **Alterable variables of instruction** to be used (i.e., additional time, group size, scaffolding, explicit instruction).

**A diagnostic assessment** should be administered if a student is not making progress at the same rate as the other students in the instructional group. The results of a diagnostic assessment provide in-depth information about a student's specific skill weaknesses. The problem solving team should review the data from a diagnostic assessment and determine the appropriate next steps. This information can be use to select a more effective match of instructional strategies to student need, modify instruction, or differentiate instruction.



An individual diagnostic assessment is time and resource intensive. Other factors that might influence progress, such as fidelity of intervention and behavior/motivation, should be ruled out first as primary causes for the lack of progress.

### **The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students**

The problem solving team follows a similar process in Tiers 1, 2, and 3. The problem solving team must establish a clear process, decision rules, and schedule to analyze the data for the determination of adequate/inadequate progress. Current research (Christ, 2006) suggests that eight weeks of data (at least 8 data points) are needed in order for the rates of growth to be reliable. If data are collected less frequently, then more weeks are needed (Burns, 2008).

A useful tool to guide the problem-solving team is the *ICEL/RIOT matrix* (included in the Toolkit).

### **Parent and Family Involvement**

The involvement of parents in the problem-solving team meetings provides the team with a valuable perspective of the home and family. It is important that parents become a meaningful partner in the implementation of interventions, the data collected to demonstrate progress, and the need to select less or more intensive instructional or behavioral strategies.

A school should provide written progress monitoring data to parents on a routine basis. In addition, parents must receive ongoing and precise information regarding their child's interventions, the child's response to the interventions, and progress toward intervention goals. This information should include but not be limited to:

- Their child's needs
- A description of the specific intervention and who is delivering instruction
- Clearly stated intervention goals and academic progress expected for their child
- The amount of time spent in each tier to determine whether the intervention is working
- Whether progress is adequate or insufficient
- The right to request a special education evaluation at any time

### **Tier 3 (Intensive or Individualized Level)**

Students whose progress is slow or insufficient to close the grade level achievement gap should be considered to receive a more intensive, individualized intervention at Tier 3.

#### **Tier 3 Interventions**

The interventions for students at Tier 3 are highly individualized and target specific skill deficits with systematic and explicit interventions and instruction. Interventions could be in addition to the core curriculum or a replacement core curriculum. When a student has a significant or broad skill deficit, a replacement core curriculum that aligns with grade level standards can be considered by the problem solving team. Instruction is provided in very small groups (2-3 students) or individually. The intervention session length and frequency should be in accordance with the research- or evidence-based criteria that supports effective results but more intense and frequent than Tier 2 interventions.

Tier 3 behavioral interventions are also highly individualized and selected based on a student's needs. Examples of interventions that would be provided in addition to direct instruction: functional behavior assessment and a behavior plan, family therapy, wraparound services that involve other agencies and cognitive behavioral therapy. The length and frequency of interventions is highly variable and dependent on a student's responsiveness and progress.

#### **Assessment that Informs Instruction**

**Progress monitoring** with CBMs may occur more frequently at Tier 3. Progress monitoring of behavioral interventions should be individually determined by the problem-solving team. One approach to determining progress is to set short term, measurable goals with a specific timeline.

#### **The Problem Solving Process for Individual Students**

Approximately 5% of students will not make adequate progress despite appropriate interventions in Tiers 1 and 2. It is critical that the problem solving team develop a process to determine adequate responsiveness to interventions. Two approaches suggested by research are slope discrepancy and dual discrepancy (D. Fuchs and Deshler).

- Slope discrepancy (D. Fuchs et al., 2004): The slope of the student's data points are compared to an expected rate of progress based on class, school, district or national norms
  - Gap Analysis: Colorado Department of Education  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdegen/downloads/RtIGuide>

- Target Slope: St. Croix River Education District  
[http://www.scred.k12.mn.us/School/documents/Slope%20for%20intial%20entitlement%208\\_09%20rev.pdf](http://www.scred.k12.mn.us/School/documents/Slope%20for%20intial%20entitlement%208_09%20rev.pdf)
- Dual discrepancy (Fuchs, 2003; Speece, Cae, & Molloy, 2003): Comparison of the slope (rate of progress) and performance level (achievement level) to grade level peers

Examples:

A gap analysis (slope discrepancy) can be useful to determine adequate progress and/or modifications to an intervention. A gap analysis is always based on current grade level norms:

**EXAMPLE:**

A student in second grade is reading 20 words per minute (wpm) based on an Oral Reading Fluency probe, given during the winter screening.

1. Determine the current benchmark expectation. For the above student the benchmark is 68 words per minute for winter.

**To determine the Gap:**

2. Divide 68 wpm (the expected benchmark) by 20 wpm (the current performance)  $68/20 = 3.4$ . The Gap the student has to close by the end of the year is 3.4.

3. Determine if the Gap is significant. A Gap above 2.0 is often considered significant.

*The next phase of Gap analysis determines what sufficient progress is necessary to close the Gap. (For the above student significant intervention is needed to attempt to close the Gap because the gap is more than 2.0.)*

4. Determine the gain the student needs to make to close the Gap. To identify the necessary gain subtract the student's current performance from the expected benchmark in the next benchmark period. For the above student the calculation is as follows:  $90 \text{ wpm (benchmark in the spring)} - 20 \text{ wpm (student's current performance)} = 70 \text{ wpm (necessary to close the gap)}$ .

5. At this point, the problem-solving team determines what progress is realistic for the student.  $70 \text{ wpm (necessary gain)} \div 15 \text{ (number of weeks for intervention)} = 4.6 \text{ wpm (weekly gain needed)}$ .

(Source: Colorado Department of Education Rtl Practitioner's Guide to Implementation)

Step 1: What is the gap?

- Divide the current grade level benchmark by the student's current performance. A number greater than 2 is significant in elementary school.

Step 2: How much progress is necessary to close the gap?

- Subtract the current performance from the end of year benchmark. Divide the "needed to catch up" number by the number of weeks left in the year.
- Then to calculate the number of weeks required for the student to meet the goal, divide the "needed to catch up" number by how much growth per week is needed.

Step 3: Is closing this gap realistic for this student?

- The problem solving team should use the gap analysis frequently throughout a Tier 3 intervention to determine if the achievement gap is closing at an acceptable rate, maintaining (flat-line), closing at an unacceptable rate, or widening.

The **dual discrepancy** approach compares the student's current achievement level (performance) on grade level standards and the student's rate of growth (progress):

Step 1: How does the student's current performance compare to grade level state or national norms?

- Research and best practice guidelines for underachievement cut points vary from the 20%ile (Shores and bender, 2007) to the 10%ile or below (Colorado Department of Education).

Step 2: How does the student's rate of growth compare to grade level expected growth based on state or national norms?

- If the student is growing at the same rate as peers, the current intervention might be appropriate.
- If the growth rate is less than the rate of peers, instructional variables (time, frequency, intensity) or a different intervention should be considered.

In the dual discrepancy approach, it is important to consider the performance level and rate of growth simultaneously to determine adequate progress and make decisions about interventions (Fuchs, w003). Evidence of a low level of achievement and an insufficient rate of growth must both be present to determine a lack of responsiveness to an intervention.

If a student continues to make insufficient progress in an intensive, individualized intervention delivered with fidelity for a reasonable period of time (e.g., 8 weeks), the problem solving teams should discuss whether a comprehensive evaluation for special education disability eligibility is warranted.

### **Parent and Family Involvement**

When a student continues to experience academic or behavioral difficulties and requires intensive Tier 3 interventions, the involvement of the parents becomes more critical. Since the problem solving team might function as the Building Intervention Team (BIT) at Tier 3, inviting parents to participate in the problem-solving team facilitates the referral process for a comprehensive evaluation, if it becomes necessary. Written information provided to parents that minimally contains the following is required:

- The child's need
- A description of the specific intervention and who is delivering instruction
- Clearly stated intervention goals and academic progress expected for their child
- How often progress will be monitored
- How adequate or insufficient progress will be determined
- The date progress will be reviewed by the problem solving team
- The right to request a special education evaluation at any time

## Summary of Instruction, Assessment and Parent/Family Involvement

	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Grouping</b>	<b>How Often</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Parent and Family Involvement</b>
<b>Tier 1</b>	<p>Scientific, research-based core curriculum</p> <p>Explicit and systematic</p> <p>Differentiated</p> <p>Student engagement and motivation</p> <p>Culturally and linguistically sensitive</p>	<p>Flexible grouping of all students based on skills</p>	<p>Daily Literacy block for 90 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome measures (1x a year)</li> <li>• Interim outcome measures (2-3 x a year)</li> <li>• Universal screening (3 x a year)</li> <li>• Progress monitoring (1x a month)</li> </ul>	<p>General RtI Overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-wide meetings</li> <li>• Brochures, newsletters</li> <li>• Parent conferences</li> <li>• Data reports and graphs</li> <li>• Right to request a special education referral</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 2</b>	<p>Research or evidence based intervention</p> <p>Explicit and systematic</p> <p>Student engagement and motivation</p> <p>Culturally and linguistically sensitive</p> <p>Match between student needs and intervention</p> <p>Supplemental or strategic</p> <p>Aligned with core</p>	<p>Small group of 4-6 students</p>	<p>20-30 minutes daily or as prescribed by intervention</p>	<p>Progress monitoring (2x a month)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBM (academics)</li> <li>• Behavior                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Rating Scales</li> <li>• Office Discipline</li> <li>• Referrals (ODR)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Diagnostic Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide progress monitoring data routinely</li> <li>• Interventions attempted</li> <li>• Child’s response to interventions</li> <li>• Progress toward grade level goals</li> <li>• Right to request a special education referral</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 3</b>	<p>Research or evidence based intervention</p> <p>Explicit and systematic</p> <p>Student engagement and motivation</p> <p>Culturally and linguistically sensitive</p> <p>Targets specific skill deficits</p> <p>Possible replacement core that addresses broad skill deficits</p>	<p>Small group of 2-3 students or individual instruction</p>	<p>Length and frequency as prescribed by intervention</p>	<p>Progress monitoring (2x a month or weekly if needed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap Analysis</li> <li>• Dual discrepancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite parents to participate in problem solving meeting</li> <li>• Provide written information</li> <li>• Right to request a special education referral</li> </ul>

## Expected Outcomes

Successful implementation of RtI requires a shift in thinking about instruction and student learning differences. It must be based on the belief that every student is the responsibility of general education. The RtI framework provides the structure to accelerate the learning and social skills of all students.

A great deal of research on RtI has addressed its usefulness to improve student achievement and decrease the impact of negative behaviors on learning. It is a resource allocation structure that uses student assessment data and a multi-tiered instructional approach to efficiently and effectively impact academic and behavioral outcomes.

RtI is a complex and robust framework. Structure and school-wide systems must be established to maintain RtI as a sustainable framework. Staff collaboration, fidelity of implementation, on-going professional development, and allocation of staff, time and funding are some of the system and structural issues that must be addressed through local districts' policies, procedures and guidance. In addition to addressing the needs of struggling learners, Wyoming districts and schools can expect some or all of the following long term outcomes:

- The prevention of most academic and behavioral difficulties
- An increase in positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students as a result of improved instruction and support (Fuchs, et al,)
- An improved school climate/culture
- The active and meaningful participation of parents and families in their child's education
- A decrease in special education referral rates
- An increase in the accuracy of referrals to special education
- A way to provide appropriate instruction to students prior to the determination of a special education disability.