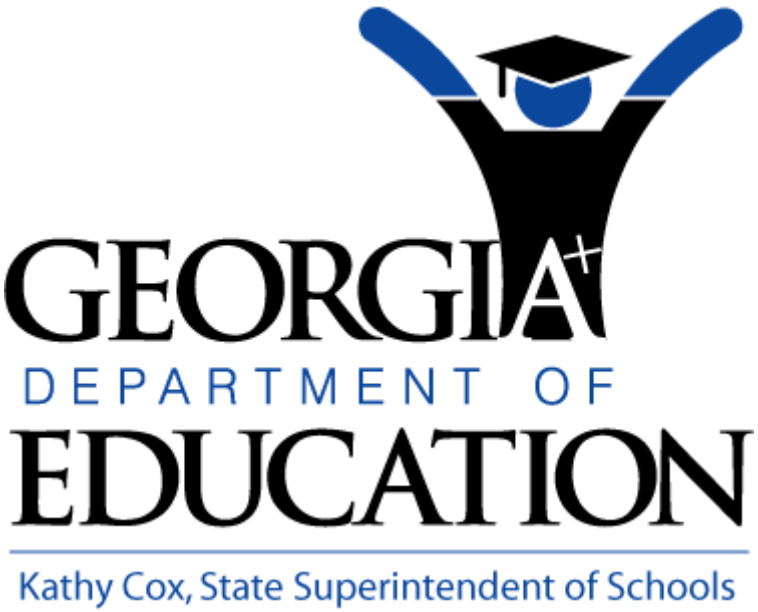
Response to Intervention:

Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions

*Responses to Meet the Needs of **ALL** Georgia Students*



Welcome!

The Georgia Department of Education is pleased to present this document as a guide for implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI). The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a common understanding and common language of RTI, practical implementation ideas, and resources for continued professional learning.

The intended audience of this document includes all parties involved in teaching and learning in Georgia's schools. This includes administrators, principals, regular education teachers, special education teachers, support staff, parents, and students.

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Introduction and Overview

Response to Intervention (RTI): The Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions is the process of aligning appropriate assessment with purposeful instruction for all students. In Georgia, Response to Intervention is based in the general education classroom where teachers routinely implement a strong and rigorous standards-based learning environment. The tiered approach to providing layers of intervention for students needing support requires a school wide common understanding of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), assessment practices, and instructional pedagogy.

Georgia's RTI process includes several key components:

- A 4-Tier delivery model designed to provide support matched to student need through the implementation of standards-based classrooms.
- Evidence-based instruction as the core of classroom pedagogy.
- Evidence-based interventions utilized with increasing levels of intensity based on progress monitoring.
- The use of a variety of ongoing assessment data to determine which students are not meeting success academically and/or behaviorally.
- Data Teams in each school serve as the driving force for instructional decision making in the building.
- Purposeful allocation of instructional resources based on student assessment data.

All students participate in general education learning. Students requiring interventions to meet individual learning expectations will receive support through a systematic and purposeful process. The number of students requiring interventions will decrease as the level of intensity of the intervention increases.

Specific information on the 4-Tier delivery model is located in this document starting at Chapter 4.

Tier 1 – Standards-Based Classroom Learning

Tier 2 – Needs-Based Learning

Tier 3 – SST-Driven Learning

Tier 4 – Specially-Designed Learning

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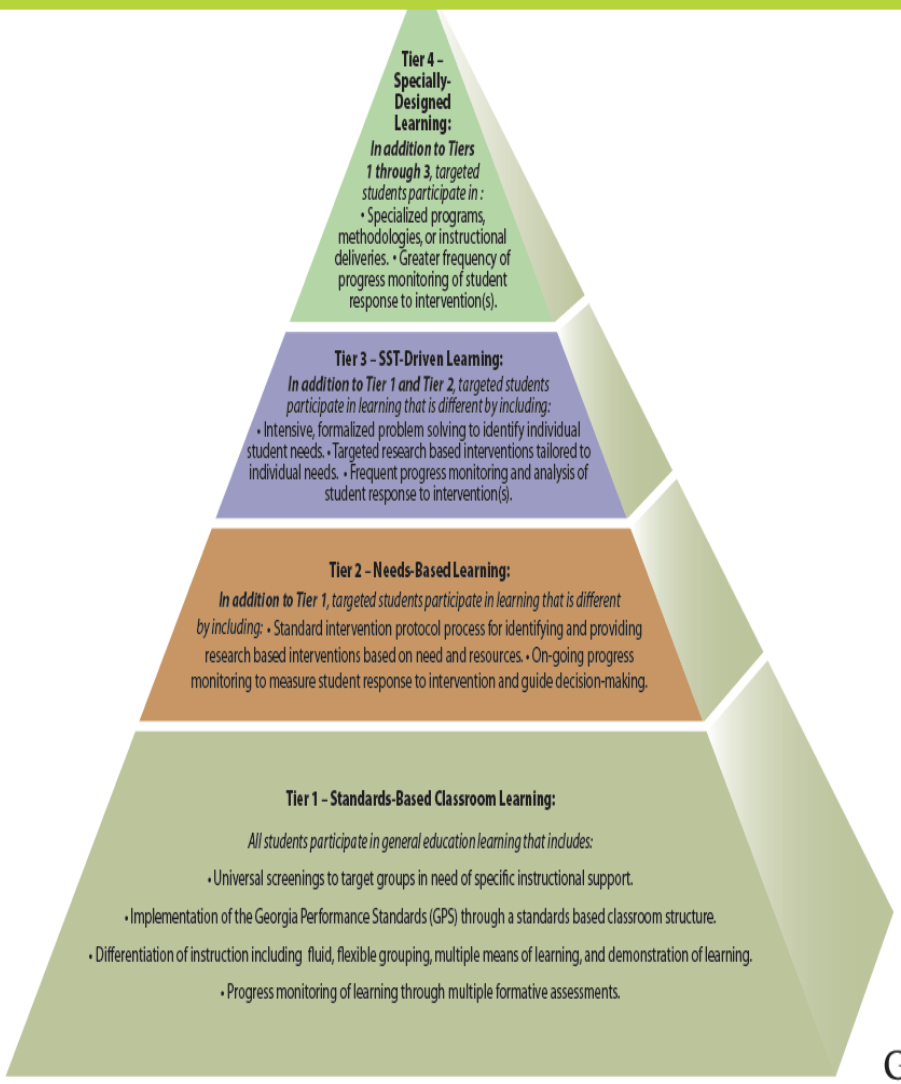


"We will lead the nation in improving student achievement."
Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Kathy Cox, State Superintendent of Schools

Chapter 1

Section 1.1 Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Acceleration – Interventions that are implemented to increase the speed at which students acquire skills.

Accommodation – Changes in instruction that enable children to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom or assessment/test setting. Accommodations are designed to provide equity, not advantage, for children with disabilities. Accommodations include assistive technology as well as alterations to presentation, response, scheduling, or settings. When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a child's disability but do not reduce or lower the standards or expectations for content. Accommodations that are appropriate for assessments do not invalidate assessment results.

Aimline – The line that connects the median baseline data point and the long range goal (LRG) data point. If you are using a data base system to enter the data, the program may plot this line. If you are hand graphing, then you would use the median baseline data point (use at least 5-7 data points for baseline) and then plot the LRG point. Connect the two points, and then you have constructed the aimline (McCook, 2006).

Alternate Assessment – An assessment aligned with alternate achievement standards for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities designed by the state and required in lieu of regular statewide assessments, when determined necessary by the child's IEP team.

Anchor Paper(s) – A sample of student work that exemplifies a specific level of performance. Raters use anchors to score student work, usually comparing the student performance to the anchor. For example, if student work was being scored on a scale of 1-5, there would typically be anchors (previously scored student work) exemplifying each point on the scale.

Assessment – Assessment is a broad term used to describe the collection of information about student performance in a particular area. Assessments can be formative or summative.

At Risk – A term applied to students who have not been adequately served by social service or educational systems and who are at risk of educational failure due to lack of services, negative life events, or physical or mental challenges, among others. (NCREL 2004)

Behavior Intervention Plan- A plan developed for children who are exhibiting behavioral difficulties that include targeted behaviors, intervention strategies, reinforcers and consequences, and a plan for collecting and monitoring data. Behavior Intervention Plans should include positive behavioral support.

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.)

Baseline – An initial observation or measurement that serves as a comparison upon which to determine student progress.

Benchmark Assessments – Student assessments used throughout a unit or course to monitor progress toward learning goals and to guide instruction. Effective benchmark assessments check understanding and

application of knowledge and skills rather than recall; consequently, effective benchmark assessments include performance tasks. Benchmark assessments may involve pre- and post-assessments.

Benchmarks for Progress Monitoring – Measures that are used to determine student progress and to guide instruction. These measures may assess a specific skill such as correct words read per minute (reading fluency).

Benchmark Papers – Another term used for anchor papers.

Commentary – Oral or written feedback that identifies the features of a work sample that illustrate the relevant parts of a standard(s). Commentary draws attention to the qualities of student work with direct reference to the performance descriptions for the relevant standards.

Common Assessment – Common assessments are the result of teachers collaborating and coming to consensus about what students should know, understand and be able to do according to the standards. Common assessments assess the standards and provide teachers a means for looking at student work.

Comprehensive Evaluation – In-depth evaluation provided when there is suspect of a disability. It is conducted to determine if a student has a disability and to determine the educational needs of the student.

Concept Map – A concept map is a document that outlines the concepts, essential questions or enduring understandings, vocabulary, instructional tools and assessments for each unit.

Content Descriptions – Content Descriptions describe how the standards set forth in the state's curriculum are assessed on the state-mandated assessments. Developed primarily for educators, each content specific document provides information about the content assessed and is based on the work of Georgia teachers. The documents are organized by each content domain (groupings of similar content standards) that is reported for an assessment. Associated curricular standards are listed as well as associated concepts, skills, and abilities (e.g., the things students are expected to know and be able to do relative to each grade and domain). There is no hierarchy in the listing; each is of equal importance. Each state-mandated assessment (i.e., CRCT, GHSGT, EOCT) is designed to assess how well students know and are able to perform each of the various concepts, skills, and abilities for a specific content area at their grade level or at the end of a course.

The Content Descriptions are in no way intended to substitute for or supplant the curriculum. They supplement the curriculum by providing more descriptive information about how content will be assessed. Furthermore, the Content Descriptions do not suggest when concepts and skills should be introduced in the instructional sequence; rather, their purpose is to communicate when and how concepts and skills will be assessed via the state-mandated assessments.

Content Standards – Content standards are broad statements of what students should know and be able to do in a specific content area. They state the purpose and direction the content is to take and are generally followed by elements.

Culminating Performance Task – A culminating performance task is designed to be completed at or near the end of a unit of instruction. The activity is designed to require students to use several concepts learned during the unit to answer a new or unique situation. The measure of this activity allows students to give evidence of their own understanding toward the mastery of the standard.

Curriculum-based Assessment – An informal assessment in which the procedures directly assess student performance in targeted content or basic skills in order to make decisions about how to better address a student's instructional needs.

Curriculum-based Measure – Curriculum-based measurement, or CBM, is a scientifically-based method of monitoring student educational progress through direct assessment of academic skills. CBM can be used to measure basic skills in reading, mathematics, spelling, vocabulary, and written expression. It can also be used to monitor readiness skills.
Curriculum Document – A curriculum document contains all standards that should be learned by all students.
Curriculum Map – A curriculum map provides an outline of the course content by units and may provide a suggested time schedule for each unit.

Data-based Instruction – An instructional approach in which student performance data is used to assess the effectiveness of the instruction and to make changes in instruction based on the data.

Data Point – An isolated piece of data on a graph or chart that illustrates a student's performance/progress.

Decision Rule- A local system's pre-determined 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 General County who do not move to low risk on the DIBELS after 12 weeks of Tier 2 intervention (small group for 20 minutes 5x per week) will begin Tier 3.

Depth of Knowledge – Depth of knowledge (DOK) is a term that refers to the substantive character of the ideas in the performance standards. DOK classifies the various levels of understanding that students must demonstrate as they encounter and master the content and skills within the performance standards. This schema for evaluating standards has four levels of knowledge: (a) recall, (b) skill/concept, (c) strategic thinking, and (d) extended thinking. Operational definitions and labels vary somewhat by subject.

Differentiation – Differentiation is a broad term referring to the need of educators to tailor the curriculum, teaching environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students. To differentiate instruction is to recognize students' varying interest, readiness levels, and learning profiles and to react responsively. There are four elements of the curriculum that can be differentiated: content, process, products and learning environment.

Elements – Elements are part of the content standard that identify specific learning goals associated with the standard.

Eligibility Team – A group of qualified professionals and the parent of the child; members determine whether the child is a child with a disability and they determine the educational needs of the child.

Enduring Understanding – An enduring understanding is a big idea that resides at the heart of a discipline and has lasting value outside the classroom. Enduring understandings should be transferable between units of a course and between courses in the same content area.

English Language Learner (ELL) – Refers to students whose first language is other than English and whose command of English is limited. The term is used interchangeably with limited English proficient.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – ESOL is an acronym that stands for English to Speakers of Other Languages. ESOL is a state funded instructional program for eligible English Language Learners (ELLs) in grades K-12.

Essential Question – An essential question gets to the heart of a particular enduring understanding and helps students relate the factual knowledge to the concepts on the unit. There are two types of essential questions that are used in the GPS frameworks.
They are broad/overarching and unit/content specific.

Evaluation – The process of making judgments about the level of student understanding or performance.

Exemplars – An example of student work which provides a model product.

Evidence-based interventions – Specific interventions supported by well designed, independent research studies. There is *evidence* that the interventions improve student outcomes. (Rathvon, 1999).

Feedback – Descriptive comments provided to or by a student that provides very specific information about what a student is/is not doing in terms of performance needed to meet identified standards/learning goals.

Fidelity – Fidelity refers to the provision or delivery of instruction in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed. Other related terms to fidelity are intervention integrity or treatment integrity which often refers to the same principle.

Flexible Grouping – A type of differentiation in which students are organized into groups based on interests and/or needs. Groups are not static and teachers use data to establish and modify the composition of the student groups.

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 – A formative assessment is an evaluation tool used to guide and monitor the progress of student learning during instruction. Its purpose is to provide continuous feedback to both the student and the teacher concerning learning successes and progress toward mastery. Formative assessments diagnose skill and knowledge gaps, measure progress, and evaluate instruction. Teachers use formative assessments to determine what concepts require more teaching and what teaching techniques require modification. Educators use results of these assessments to improve student performance. Formative assessments would not necessarily be used for grading purposes. Examples include (but are not limited to): pre/post tests, curriculum based measures (CBM), portfolios, benchmark assessments, quizzes, teacher observations, teacher/student conferencing, and teacher commentary and feedback.

Frameworks – Frameworks are intended to be models for articulating desired results, assessment processes, and teaching-learning activities that can maximize student achievement relative to the Georgia Performance Standards. They may provide enduring understandings, essential questions, tasks/activities, culminating tasks, rubrics, and resources for the units.

Functional Behavior Assessment – A problem-solving process for addressing student behavior that uses techniques to identify what triggers a given behavior(s) and to identify interventions that directly address them.

Georgia Performance Standards – The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) provide clear expectations for assessment, instruction, and student work for each grade level and subject area. The GPS includes standards for reading, English, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, all of which will be completely phased in by 2010.

Gifted Student – A gifted student is a student who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities.

Guidance – Information provided to the student about what to do next, including steps or strategies to try in order to improve and progress toward identified standards/ learning goals.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written document that outlines the special education and related services specifically designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability. A written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with IDEA 2004.

Individualized Education Program Team (IEP Team) – Individuals who are responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a child with a disability.

Interventions – Targeted instruction that is based on student needs. Interventions supplement the general education curriculum. Interventions are a systematic compilation of well researched or evidence-based specific instructional strategies and techniques.

Lexile – Lexile, also known as the Lexile Score or Lexile Measure, is a standard score that matches a student's reading ability with difficulty of text material. A Lexile can be interpreted as the level of book that a student can read with 75% comprehension. Experts have identified 75% comprehension level as offering the reader a certain amount of comfort and yet still offering a challenge. Lexiles range between approximately BR (for beginning reader) and 1700.

Modifications – Alterations that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. Consistent use of modifications can negatively impact grade level achievement outcomes. Modifications in statewide assessments may invalidate the results of the assessment.

Organizing Framework – An organizing framework guides teachers as they plan for instruction ensuring that all standards are addressed and achieved by the end of the year.

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, enabling a teacher to know "how good is good enough." Performance standards incorporate content standards, but expand upon them by providing suggested tasks, sample student work, and teacher commentary.

Performance Task – A performance task is a formative assessment that checks for student understanding/misunderstanding and/or progress toward the standards/learning goals at different points

during a unit of instruction. Performance tasks involve the application of knowledge and skills rather than recall and result in tangible products or observable performances. They involve meaning-making, encourage self-evaluation and revision, require judgment to score, and are evaluated using predetermined criteria (rubrics). Culminating performance tasks differ from other performance tasks because they are created over time during the unit. Culminating performance tasks measure conceptual understanding of the standards/learning goals specified for a specific unit and usually involve multiple modalities.

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, or 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 (Jim Wright, Intervention Central website: http://www.interventioncentral.com/).

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.

Process Standards – Process standards define the means used to determine patterns of thought and behavior that lead to conceptual understanding.

Professional Learning Community – A group of individuals who seek and participate in professional learning on an identified topic.

Progress Monitoring – Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

Pyramid of Interventions – The Pyramid of Intervention is also known as the Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions. It is a conceptual framework developed by GaDOE that will enable all students in Georgia to continue to make great gains in school. The pyramid is a graphic organizer that illustrates layers of instructional efforts that can be provided to students according to their individual needs.

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.

Research Based Intervention - The methods, content, materials, etc. were developed in guidance from the collective research and scientific community. (Harn, 2007)

Rubrics – Based on a continuum of performance quality and a scale of different possible score points, a rubric identifies the key traits or dimensions to be examined and assessed and provides key features of performance for each level of scoring.

Scaffolding – Scaffolding is the instructional technique of using teacher support to help a student practice a skill at a higher level than he or she would be capable of independently. The opportunity to practice the

skill at this level helps students advance to the point where they no longer need the support and can operate at this high level on their own.

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]

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support - "A broad range of systematic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students." (Sugai et al., 2005) Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is based on a problem-solving model and aims to prevent inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2007).

Scoring Rubric – A scoring guide that enables teachers to make reliable judgments about student work and enables students to self-assess their work. A rubric is based on a continuum of performance quality and is built upon a scale of different possible score points to be assigned. A rubric identifies the key traits or dimensions to be examined and assessed and provides key features of performance for each level of scoring (descriptors) which signify the degree to which the criteria have been met.

Standard – A standard is something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value or quality. A standard defines the broad expectations for an area of knowledge in a given domain and may include an expectation of the degree to which a student expresses his or her understanding of that knowledge.

Standard Intervention Protocol – A process where a school or system uses pre-determined scientifically based interventions in a specific sequence with identified students, usually implemented at Tier 2.

Standards-Based Classroom – A standards-based classroom is a classroom where teachers and students have a clear understanding of the expectations (standards). They know what they are teaching/learning each day, why the day's learning is important to know or know how to do, as well as how to do it. They also know that they are working toward meeting standards throughout the year and that standards-based learning is a process, not an event.

Standards-Based Instructional Bulletin Boards – A strategically placed bulletin board in the classroom that provides examples of student work that have been correlated to the standards by elements. Generally, the student work, the task, the standard, and the commentary on the work are posted on the bulletin board for which students and others can refer as a model or exemplar of student work that meets or approaches meeting the standard(s).

Strand – A strand is an organizing tool used to group standards by content.

Strategy – A loosely defined collective term that is often used interchangeably with the word "intervention"; however strategies are generally considered effective instructional/behavioral practices rather than a set of prescribed instructional procedures, systematically implemented.

Student Commentary – A student's oral or written self-reflective, metacognitive comments that self-assess his or her progress toward the specified standard(s) and that provide feedback to the teacher in

terms of student understanding; as a result of effective self-assessment, students develop the skills necessary to self-adjust and become more independent learners.

Student Support Team – The Student Support Team (SST) is a multi-disciplinary team which utilizes a problem-solving process to investigate the educational needs of students who are experiencing academic and/or social/behavioral difficulties. SST, which is required in every Georgia public school uses a data-driven process to plan individualized supports and interventions and the method of assessing their effectiveness.

Student with a Disability – Refers to a child evaluated as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as emotional disturbance), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, or a specific learning disability who needs special education and related services.

Student Work – Student work may or may not demonstrate that the student is meeting the standard. Student work should be used by the teacher to show the student what meeting the standard means.

Summative Assessment – A summative assessment is an evaluation tool generally used at the end of an assignment, unit, project, or course. In an educational setting, summative assessments tend to be more formal kinds of assessments (e.g., unit tests, final exams, projects, reports, and state assessments) and are typically used to assign students a course grade or to certify student mastery of intended learning outcomes for the Georgia Performance Standards.

Tasks – Tasks provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate what they can do, what knowledge they have, what understanding they have that relates to specific standards or elements. This demonstration may occur at any time during the course or at the end of the course.

Teacher Commentary – Oral or written comments made by the teacher that provide feedback to the student regarding his/her progress toward the specified standard(s); comments may include praise in addition to constructive criticism and will often include guidance for revising work or for future work. Teacher commentary shows students why they did or did not meet a standard and enables the student to take ownership of his/her own learning.

Note: *Public commentary* is posted commentary that specifies the evidence in student work that effectively illustrates relevant parts of the standard(s); these are general statements provided to guide parents and students in understanding the standards. *Private commentary* is commentary that identifies the features of a specific student's work sample that illustrate the relevant parts of a standard(s) as well as feedback and guidance for next steps. Private commentary is meant for the student, teacher and parent, not the public.

Teaching Rubric – Teaching rubrics are explicitly designed to support as well as to evaluate student learning. Teaching rubrics have several features that support learning:
• Teaching rubrics are written in language that students can understand;
• Teaching rubrics are created with students as a result of the teaching that has occurred in the classroom (not before the teaching takes place);
• Teaching rubrics define and describe quality work;
• Teaching rubrics refer to common weaknesses in students' work and indicate how those weaknesses can be avoided, and;
• Teaching rubrics can be used by students to assess their works-in-progress and guide revision and improvement.

Tiered Instruction – Levels of instructional intensity within a tiered delivery model.

Trend Line – Line of a graph that connects data points. This is used to compare against aimlines to determine responsiveness to interventions. The trend line is what the student has actually achieved vs. the aimline which is the desired performance score.

Universal Screening – A process of reviewing student performance through formal and/or informal assessment measures to determine progress in relation to student benchmarks; related directly to student learning standards.

Link to a glossary of terms on the RTI Action Network:

http://www.rtinetwork.org/component/option,com_glossary/

Chapter 2

Section 2.1 Research

RTI is generally understood to be an evidence-based approach to providing early intervention to struggling learners in general education and special education settings. Its core principles are that Tier 1 evidence-based instruction is provided with fidelity, student progress is monitored frequently, students' responsiveness to intervention is evaluated, and instruction is adapted as needed (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). It has come to the forefront of education reform efforts in recent years, with both federal legislation and state initiatives promoting use of RTI and similar initiatives. RTI has promise in serving as a mechanism to address NCLB and IDEA 2004 mandates, concerns about traditional special education identification procedures, the disproportionate representation of minorities in special education, the integration of general and special education, and the delivery of evidence-based programs to students.

Integration of Program Areas

RTI's emphasis on integration of program areas, application of a problem solving approach, and use of evidence-based instruction as well as progress monitoring data were mentioned as practices that may improve educational outcomes such as academic achievement, behavior, and graduation rates. Indeed, RTI has programmatic collaboration built into its design since it requires coordinated decision-making and resource sharing among general education, special education, and related services personnel. Similarly, the statewide standards-based curriculum in Georgia, applied to all program areas, is expected to be facilitated, in part, through the state's tiered intervention model. Georgia is an example of how an RTI approach is used to improve school services—the School Improvement program area uses it to help schools in the AYP Needs Improvement category; Curriculum and Instruction uses it as a tool to provide differentiated instruction; and Special Education uses it as an alternative in the student eligibility decision process.

Basis for informing instructional decision-making

Some researchers assert that there is a lack of evidence of the cost effectiveness and validity of aligning instruction to diagnostic classifications (Canter, 2004; Fletcher et al., 2002; Reschly & Tilly, 1999; Ysseldyke & Marston, 1999). Recent RTI-related literature suggests that a central advantage of RTI over the IQ-achievement discrepancy model is RTI's provision of information directly relevant to the design, delivery, and monitoring of student progress to appropriate instruction (Bradley, Danielson & Doolittle, 2007). Currently, states are shifting from categorizing and labeling students to focusing much more on the instructional needs of students—with the goal of basing instructional decisions on how students are progressing. It is anticipated that this shift will help integrate general and special education, streamline resources, and promote greater inclusion of students with special needs.

Disproportionality

RTI may reduce the disproportionate representation of minorities in special education. All states and schools in the U.S. are accountable for disproportionality in special education through State Performance Plan reporting to the Office of Special Education Programs. RTI can be used as a strategy to account for cultural and linguistic considerations and differences among students when designing interventions, thereby possibly reducing the disproportionate identification of minority students. Research evidence on the potential of RTI to reduce the disproportionate number of minority students is promising. Marston (2002) cites significant decreases in placement rates of minority students in special education with RTI. In the Minneapolis Public Schools, Marston, Muyskens, Lau, and Cantor (2003) found that the RTI

process reduced disproportionality for African-American students, and similarly, VanDerHeyden and Witt (2005) found a significant increase in the rate of response of minority students to early intensive instruction.
The Georgia Department of Education has acknowledged that disproportionality represents a serious concern in the state and Georgia is under consent decrees requiring the elimination of this disproportionality. Leading academics have argued that the IQ-achievement discrepancy model has contributed to disproportionality because cognitive measures may be culturally biased and narrowly defined (Fletcher et al., 2002).

Special Education Identification

Finally, RTI has been discussed in the literature as an alternative method to the traditional IQ-achievement discrepancy model for identifying and intervening with students' learning problems or disabilities. With the discrepancy model, a student must evidence a severe discrepancy between general intelligence and academic achievement before being identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD) in order to receive special education services and the discrepancy is typically not evident until a student has completed two or more years of schooling. This represents a "wait to fail" approach that is considered by many to work against early intervention. Indeed, researchers have cited the advantages of early identification and remediation of students with SLD (Gresham 2002; Jenkins & O'Connor, 2002). Delaying identification of SLD until a child falls below a predicted level of performance can result in at least two years of academic failure (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

RTI and its Relationship to Other State and Federal Programs

NCLB's focus on evidence-based practice, data-driven decision-making, and multi-tiered intervention reflects the fundamental elements of RTI and similar tiered-interventions. NCLB's focus on preventing learning problems, reducing achievement gaps among minority students, and intervening early with struggling learners is further specified in IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 allows an RTI approach as a means to determine student eligibility for special education. IDEA 2004 promotes instructional practice and decision-making procedures designed to ensure that poor instruction or cultural bias does not lead to the misidentification of minority students in special education. At its core, IDEA 2004 encourages reforms that better integrate special and general education systems and the law's corresponding emphasis on improving outcomes for both at-risk students and those with learning disabilities is very much in line with the aims of RTI.

Decision makers have been working for many years to improve school practices and classroom instruction with approaches and features—such as teacher support teams, a problem solving process, data-based decision making—that characterize RTI.

In the planning and development stages for RTI or tiered approach initiatives, informational resources may provide assistance in becoming familiar with the components of RTI and the research base behind it, exploring particular models, and gathering information on elements to consider in implementing RTI. Sources include:

- National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI)
- National Resource Center on Learning Disabilities (NCRLD)
- National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
- National Center on Educational Outcomes
- National Technical Assistance Center on Student Progress Monitoring
- The IRIS Center at Peabody
- *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, by Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker and Gayle Karhanek

- Response to Intervention: Training for California Educators (California Department of Education five-part video series)
- Florida Center for Reading Research
- Iowa Heartland Model

Two RTI models have emerged as options for implementation: the problem-solving model and the standard protocol model, with variations and hybrids emerging based on the two (Hollenbeck, 2007; Fuchs et al., 2003). The problem-solving model (PSM) evolved out of school problem-solving teams (Graner et al., 2005) and behavioral consultation (Fuchs et al., 2003). The approach relies on groups of teachers and specialists to design and monitor interventions with students identified as having academic challenges (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). In contrast to PSM, the standard protocol model (STP) uses school or class-wide screening to identify student learning problems, which are then addressed using predetermined, instructional techniques and interventions. In practice, the features of the problem-solving and standard protocol approaches can be merged (Hollenbeck, 2007). For example, Iowa's Heartland AEA Problem-Solving model, initiated in 1988, has evolved over time from allowing maximum flexibility for LEAs within the parameters of the model's design principles to incorporating more standardized protocols and commercially available interventions (Jankowski, 2003; Grimes & Kurns, 2003).
Although there is limited published information or research available about state RTI planning and implementation experiences, experts generally recommend a phased introduction over a number of years that allows sufficient time for educators and administrators to accommodate new practices (Fuchs & Deschler, 2007). The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) defines the following RTI core implementation features, such as:[1]

- Universal screening of academics and behavior
- High-quality research-based classroom instruction
- Implementation of appropriate research-based interventions
- Continuous progress monitoring of students' response to interventions

NRCLD also identifies several common attributes of RTI implementation:

- The concept of multiple tiers of increasingly intense student interventions
- Implementation of a differentiated curriculum
- Instruction delivered by staff other than the classroom teacher
- Categorical or non-categorical placement decisions

The most mature examples of wide-scale adoption of RTI are Iowa's Heartland AEA model, Minneapolis's PSM model, and Florida's Problem Solving and Response to Intervention project.

Iowa: http://www.aea11.k12.ia.us/

Minneapolis: http://speced.mpls.k12.mn.us/PSM.html

Florida: http://floridarti.usf.edu/

Chapter 3 – Solving Learning Concerns

Section 3.1 Problem Solving and Standard Protocol

Considering the research within Response to Intervention, two models have been widely implemented around the nation: Problem Solving and Standard Protocol. Problem Solving is a process that uses the skills of professionals from different disciplines to study student achievement, implement scientifically based interventions, and evaluate impact on performance. Standard Protocol is a process where a school or system uses pre-determined scientifically based interventions in a specific sequence with identified students. Both models offer strong structures for teams to support student achievement. **The Georgia Department of Education recommends the use of a blended approach to solving student learning issues.** Combining both approaches will allow schools the flexibility to identify research based and research proven reading, mathematics, and behavioral interventions. Schools will then be able to insert these interventions at each tier of the pyramid. The effectiveness of any problem solving approach will be enhanced by using a common set of interventions to support student achievement.

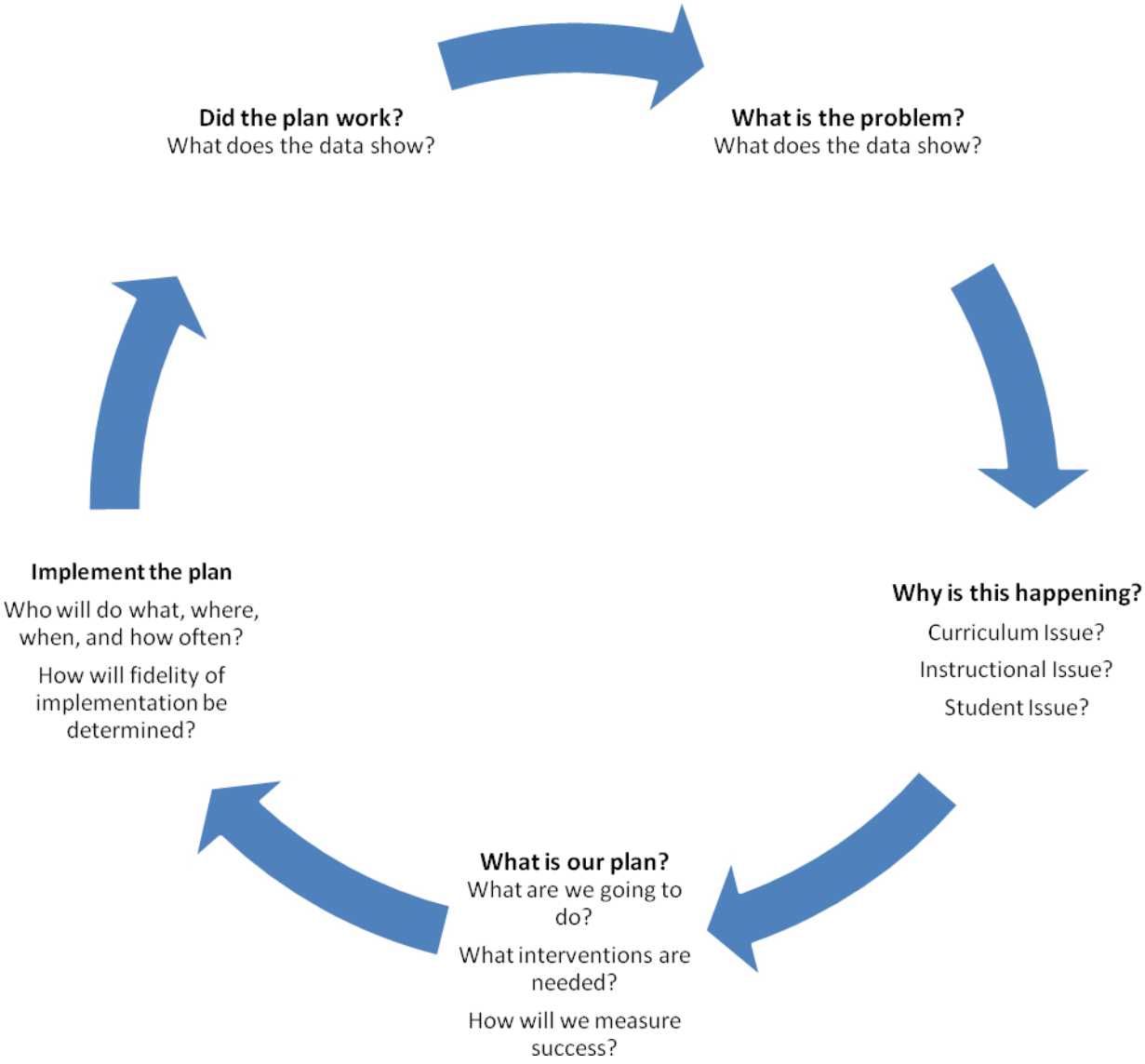
The exact Scientifically Based Research language from NCLB Section 9101 (37) reads:

> (37) SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH- The term scientifically based research —
>
> (A) means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and
>
> (B) includes research that —
>
> (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
>
> (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
>
> (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators;
>
> (iv) is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;
>
> (v) ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and
>
> (vi) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

Data Teams

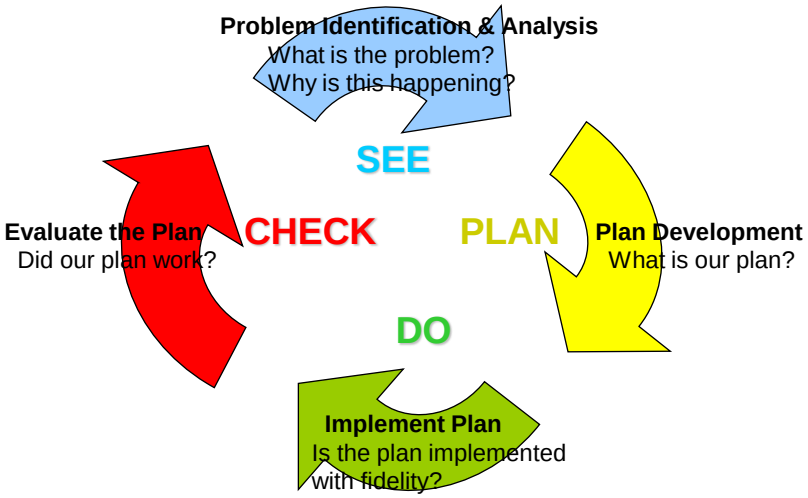
The Georgia Department of Education recommends the formation of a data team at each school. This team would be responsible for analyzing achievement and discipline data from both formative and summative measures in use. This team would lead the work of using district and school performance norms to set criteria for expected growth and the identification of scientifically based interventions needed to support the learner. School level participants should include the principal, grade level/content area representatives, counselors, and school psychologist.

This graphic illustrates Georgia's process that data teams should follow for solving student learning and behavioral concerns:



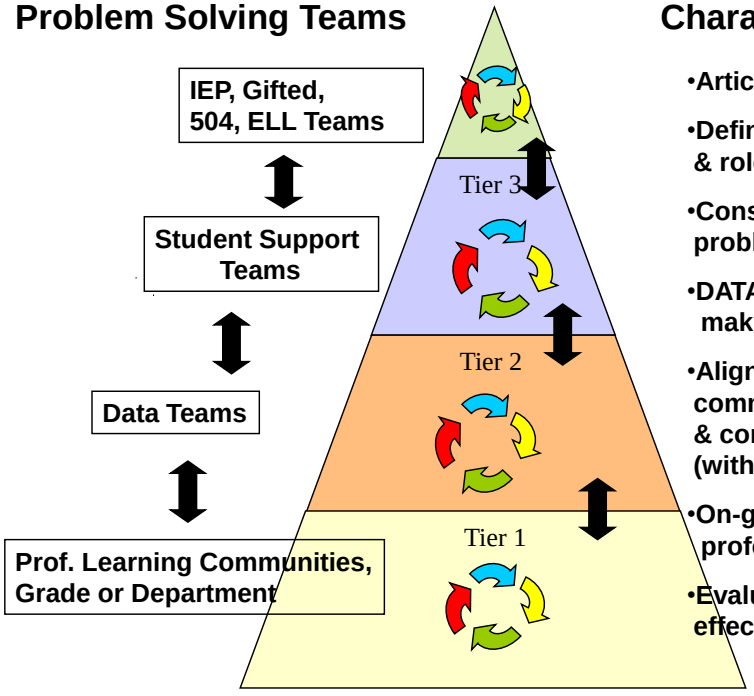
Problem Solving occurs at all Tiers. Teachers are continually using data to drive instructional decision making. Here is another visual from SSTAGE (Student Support Team Association of Georgia Educators) that shows the problem solving involved in supporting students:

The Problem Solving Process…
Data-Driven Decision Making



Source: Lynn L. Pennington, SSTAGE

Problem Solving Teams



Characteristics

- **Articulated goal/purpose**
- **Defined responsibilities & roles of members**
- **Consistent multi-step problem solving process**
- **DATA *drives* decision making**
- **Alignment, communication, & connectedness (with/to other teams)**
- **On-going, embedded professional learning**
- **Evaluation of team effectiveness**

Source: Lynn L. Pennington, SSTAGE

What is the problem?

A review of student achievement data at the district and school level will reveal patterns in learning. These patterns are used to develop system norms for expected student achievement. Schools will use these norms to identify students not meeting their individual expected potential. The use of a Universal Screener, based on the Georgia Performance Standards, is critical to identifying students who may need additional assessments to determine learning gaps. If less than 80% of the school's students meet standards, the data team should use local school norms to identify targeted students and work to raise the school to district standards.

Why is this happening?

The Department suggests a deep look at the reasons why learning is occurring at the rate identified for individual students.

- Are the Georgia Performance Standards being implemented in classrooms? The universal screener and benchmark assessments should be based on the GPS, so it is reasonable to require schools to ensure that the curriculum is being learned to the level of rigor expected at each grade level. If the curriculum contains a lack of clarity, limited rigor, and/or inappropriate depth of learning, this is a curriculum issue. A review of the curriculum and professional learning is needed.
- Explicit and systematic instruction should be in all classrooms. Research based instructional strategies, teacher modeling, student feedback, and teacher commentary are the foundation of standards-based classrooms. The uses of formative assessment to guide instruction, along with appropriate student engagement and management skills, are requirements in all classrooms in Georgia. An instructional issue would be identified by what the teacher is or is not doing in the classroom. Professional Learning will be required to ensure standards-based instruction is occurring in all classrooms and to support the content knowledge of teachers.
- Finally, after removing the possibility of curriculum or instructional issues, the school can reasonably begin the process of determining if the progress gaps are due to how the student learns.

What is our plan?

At this stage, the team has the responsibility of deciding which of the pre-identified interventions would be most appropriate for supporting the student. A deep review of student and teacher historical data will guide this decision. The team will create a specific plan to include progress monitoring, growth expectations, and timelines to evaluate progress. Professional Learning support will be in place to ensure the interventions are implemented with fidelity.

Implement the Plan

As the plan is implemented, the Department strongly suggests a constant flow of communication between the teacher providing the intervention and the core teachers. This will support the transfer of learning from the intervention to the core area being targeted. Additionally, checks for fidelity of implementation should occur by the data team and/or SST team to ensure accurate implementation of the intervention.

What is fidelity of Implementation? (NRCLD 2006)
Fidelity of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered (Gresham, MacMillan, Boebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Fidelity must also address the integrity with which screening and progress-monitoring procedures are completed and an explicit decision-making model is followed. In an RTI model, fidelity is important at both the school level (e.g., implementation of the process) and the teacher level (e.g., implementation of instruction and progress monitoring).

How can schools ensure fidelity of implementation? (NRCLD 2006)

- Link interventions to improved outcomes (credibility)
- Definitively describe operations, techniques, and components
- Clearly define responsibilities of specific persons
- Create a data system for measuring operations, techniques, and components
- Create a system for feedback and decision making (formative)
- Create accountability measures for non-compliance

Did the plan work?

At the designated points for data collection, the team will measure plan success. The team will document growth and create next level of support for the student.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends the problem solving process checklist be used as a guide for implementation of the problem solving process. This document will support the accountability of school based personnel working to address identified areas of concern for individual student achievement.

Persons involved in the plan for addressing student achievement concerns should be knowledgeable about teacher development and instructional pedagogy. This document will provide a common framework of understanding for school and system level professional learning initiatives designed to ensure instructional and behavioral interventions are implemented with fidelity.

Source: St. Croix River Educational District

Problem Solving Process Checklist

Standard	Completion date	Person Responsible
Problem Identification – What is the problem?		
▪ An initial performance concern was defined in observable measurable terms and was quantified. (list all concerns, prioritize one, collect data to determine a area of concern in expected performance)		
▪ Documented Data from at least two sources converge to support the performance concern statement. (i.e., interview + observation, or assessment data + observation, student work samples). Assessment information to include formative and summative data.		
▪ Student baseline data in the area of concern is collected using a measurement system with sufficient technical adequacy for ongoing frequent measurement, and includes a minimum of 3 data points with standardized procedures for assessment. Baseline data are graphed.		
Problem Analysis – Why is this happening?		
▪ Data from a variety of sources and domains were collected to consider multiple hypotheses for the cause of the identified discrepancy. These data are documented.		
▪ A single hypothesis for the cause of the discrepancy in expected performance was selected. At least two pieces of data converge to support this hypothesis. At least one of these is quantitative.		
Plan Development – What is our plan?		
▪ A data-based goal was established that describes the learner, conditions (time and materials for responding), expected performance, and an expected goal attainment date. The goal and date are indicated on a graph.		
▪ The intervention selected meets federal definition of scientifically research-based intervention. The selected intervention directly addresses the specific identified problem and the hypothesis for the cause of the performance concern.		
▪ A written intervention plan was clearly defined that explicitly describes what will be done, where, when, how often, how long (per session), by whom, and with what resources.		
▪ A written description of the progress-monitoring plan was completed and includes who will collect data, data collection methods, conditions for data collections, and schedule.		
▪ Benchmark criteria were set in advance to determine progress.		
▪ A plan evaluation meeting was set for no more than 6-8 weeks after the plan was established.		
Implement the Plan		
▪ A direct observation of the intervention to monitor fidelity was completed at least one time. Any discrepancies between the written plan and the intervention in action were noted and resolved. Observations continued until the intervention being delivered and the written intervention plan matched. Written documentation of each observation was made.		
▪ Data were collected and graphed as stated in plan. The required number of data points were collected under the same intervention conditions after integrity was established.		
Plan Evaluation – Did the plan work?		
▪ Team documented agreement that the plan was carried out as intended.		
▪ Team determined and documented whether the pre-intervention discrepancy in expected performance decreased, increased, or stayed the same during the plan implementation phase.		
▪ Team decided to continue the plan unmodified, modify, fade, or terminate the plan. Team documented this decision.		

Section 3.2 Progress Monitoring

What is progress monitoring and how does it fit with Response to Intervention?

Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to assess student's academic and/or behavior performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or an entire class.

Within a classroom, teachers should know their students through assessments. Understanding that learning occurs at a different pace for all students, teachers should incorporate frequent opportunities for students to "show what they know." The assessment strategy used for these frequent formative assessments should be deeply aligned with grade level GPS for any content area.

Several organizational structures need to be in place to support progress monitoring. First, schools should create schedules that allow for collaborative planning. The importance of a common understanding of GPS expectations is required for teacher teams. Second, schools should initiate content area vertical (across grade level and K-12) discussions. These discussions will support a strong understanding of rigorous assessment and the instruction needed for student mastery. Third, schools should establish a clear professional learning plan to support the use of a variety of assessment strategies as students work to "show what they know."

In many cases, the intensity of the progress monitoring increases as students move through the tiers of the Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions.

Tier 1 – Universal screenings are used for reading, math, and/or behavior for all students at all levels. Classroom teachers use frequent common formative assessments to measure progress. Teams of teachers routinely create these common formative assessments and benchmark criteria for success, use the data to collaboratively discuss instructional approaches, and design learning opportunities to address individual needs. Progress monitoring data is purposefully collected and organized, shared with students and parents, and is the driving force of the instructional program.

Tier 2 – Students identified for Tier 2 interventions are regularly assessed to measure understanding and transfer of learning to core classrooms. The progress monitoring process used for the intervention is pre-identified by the school data team based on the intervention components and should include curriculum based measures and/or other standardized assessments. Benchmarks for expected progress are set, and student progress toward these benchmarks is closely monitored through assessments. Graphs of these purposeful data points are needed to illustrate the progress toward benchmark goal. These data graphs support the data team in monitoring individual student growth as well as the fidelity of implementation of the intervention.

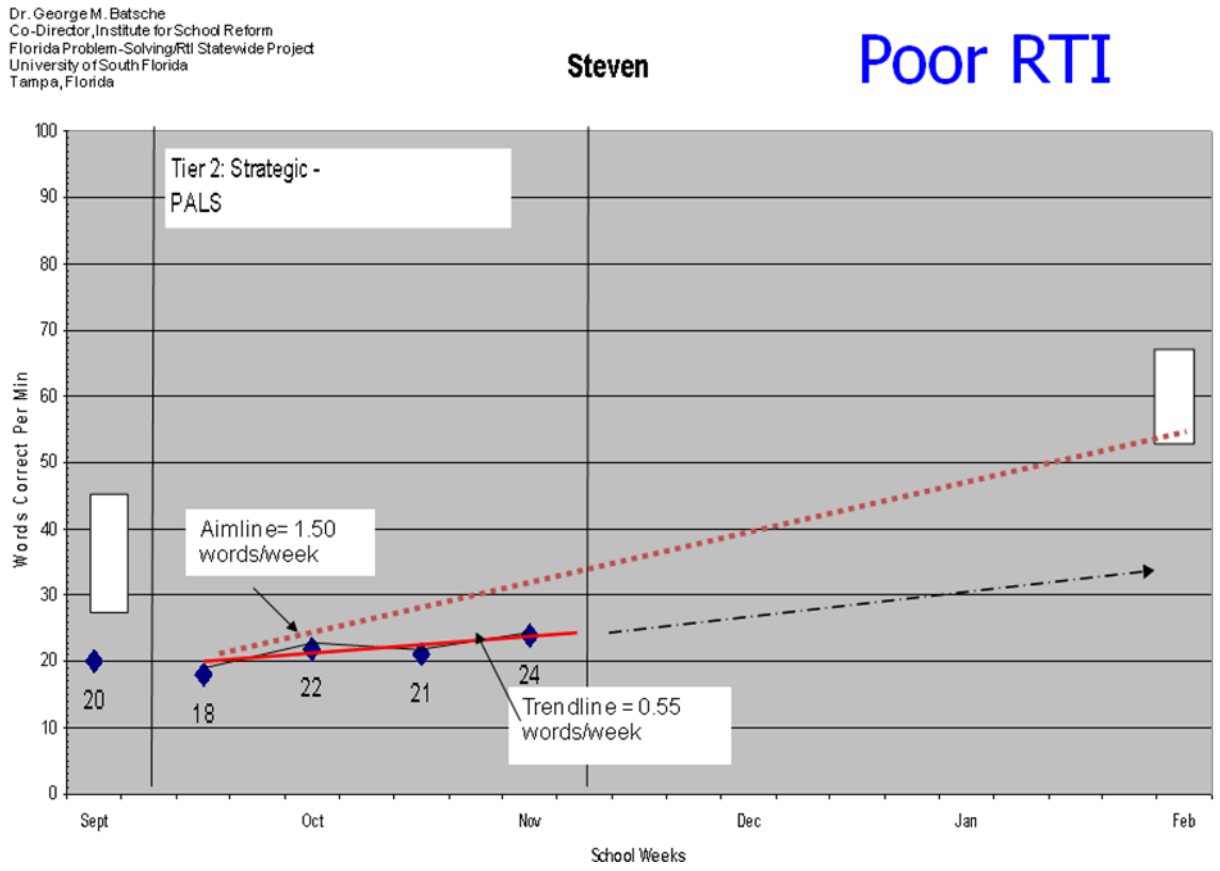
Tier 3 – Students identified for Tier 3 interventions will be closely monitored based on the interventions designed by the Student Support Team during the problem solving process. At this level, clear documentation of progress monitoring data is needed to support the deep focus on the individual. Graphs of assessment trends are required to show progress and identify transfer of learning to the core classrooms.

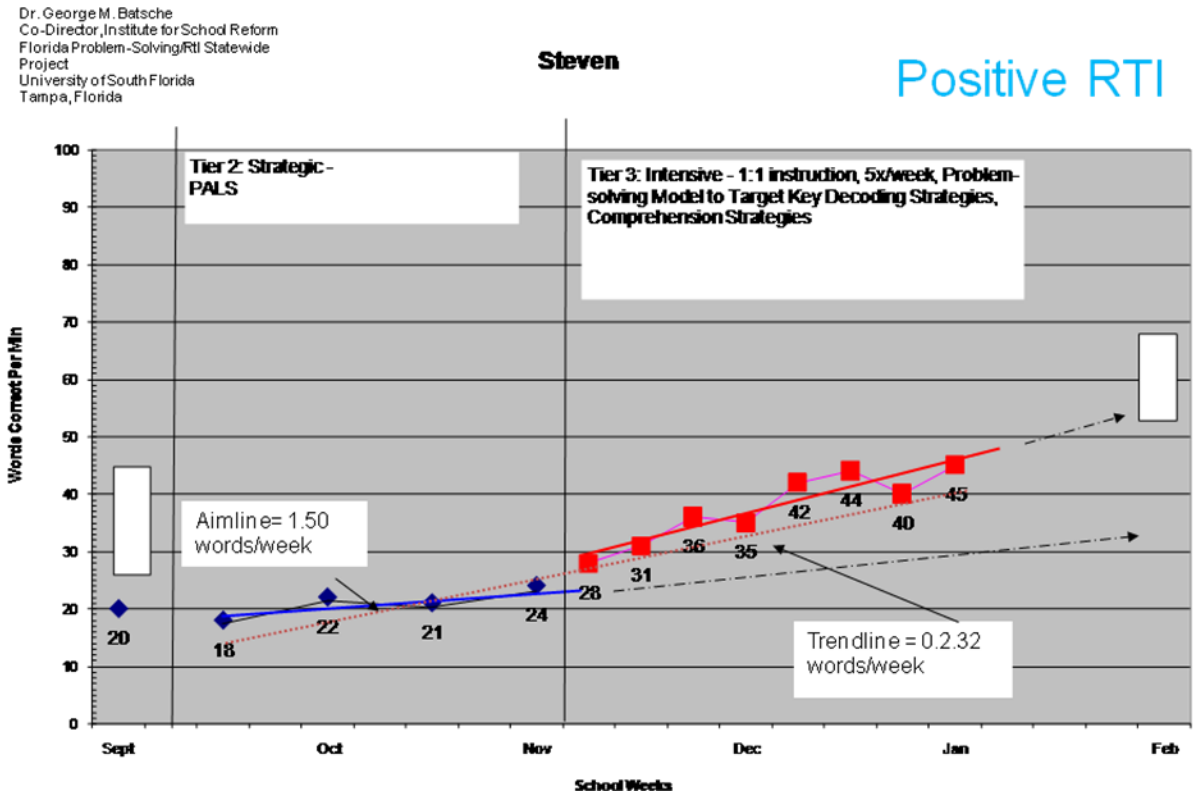
Tier 4 – Students identified for Tier 4 interventions will be involved in deep, systematic, and formalized progress monitoring, data collection, and targeted instruction. Tier 4 interventions are individualized based on student assessment data. Documentation of progress is comprehensive and robust.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts and schools use an established data-management system to allow ready access to students' progress monitoring data.

Below are examples of graphs from Dr. George Batsche at the University of South Florida. Graphs such as these examples should be used with Tier 2-4 students in order to address individual responses to an intervention. In these examples, the dotted red line is the aimline (the rate and achievement expectations established by the data team), and the solid red line is the trendline (the rate and achievement based on student performance assessments within the intervention). The first graph shows a student's response to a Tier 2 intervention, PALS. Based on the progress monitoring data, this student is not responding to the intervention as expected by the data team. The second graph shows the same student and his/her response to the addition of a Tier 3, one-on-one intervention. Based on the progress monitoring data, this student is responding positively to the intervention as indicated by the trendline.

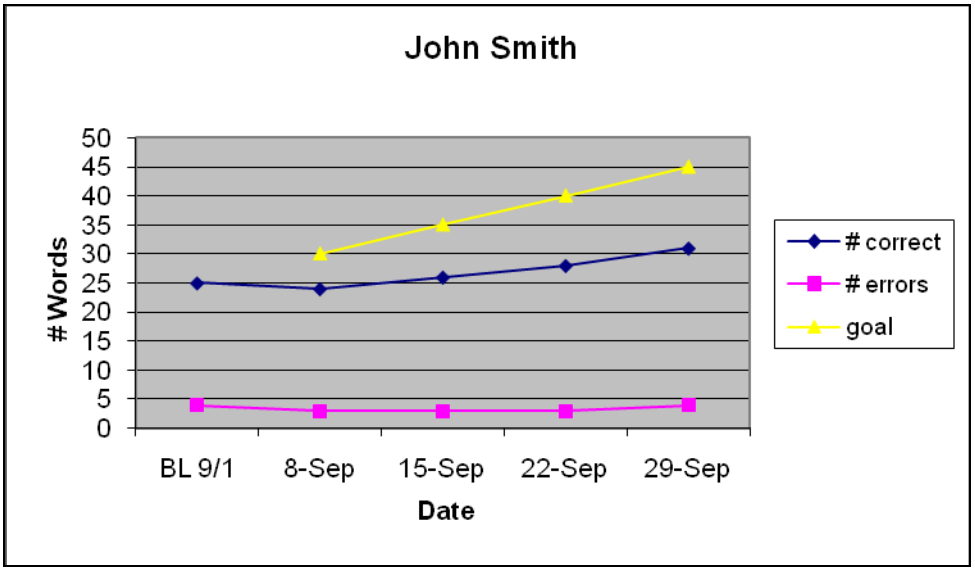
The data team should use a graphing system in order to accurately measure a student's response to the intervention and identify additional intervention to utilize, if necessary. It is important to remember that a student not responding to a Tier 2 intervention does not automatically need a Tier 3 intervention. The data team should consider other factors influence on the effectiveness of the intervention, such as inconsistent implementation, student and/or teacher absenteeism, interruptions, etc. In most cases, the data team should consider a variety of Tier 2 interventions within the standard protocol established at the local school.





Below are examples from Georgia schools:

Cobb County Public Schools – this is an example of charting a student's words read correctly over a 4 week period.

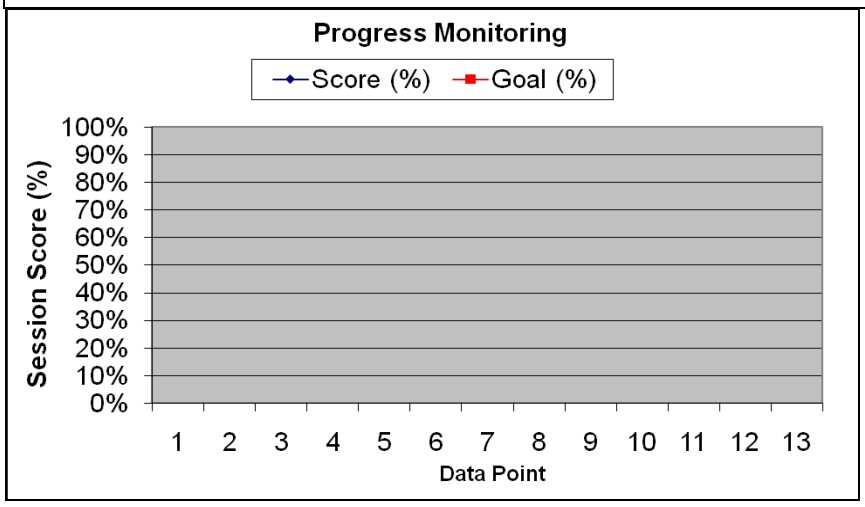


Barrow County Schools RTI Progress Monitoring

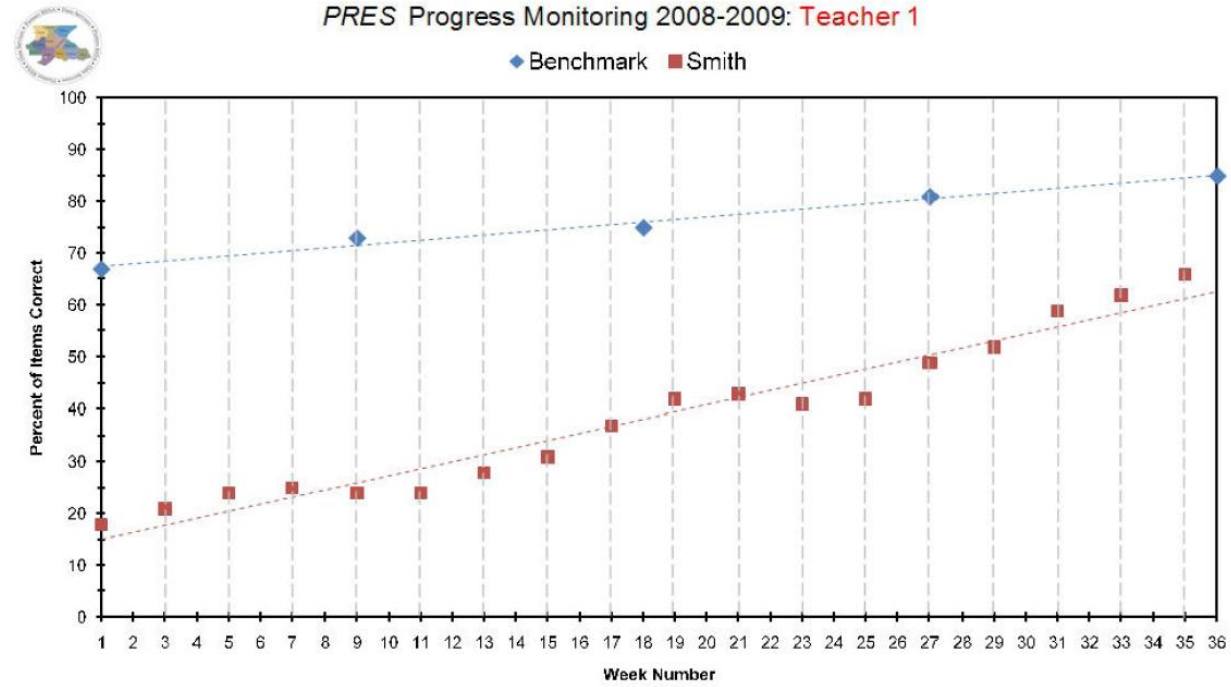
Student	**Date**
School	**Grade/Tier**
Completed By	**Title**
Academic/Behavioral Skill Targeted	
Instrument/Measure Utilized	

Baseline	Score (%)	Goal (%)	Date	Phase
BL	#N/A	#N/A		
Data Point	**Score (%)**	**Goal (%)**	**Date**	**Phase**
1	#N/A	#N/A		
2	#N/A	#N/A		
3	#N/A	#N/A		
4	#N/A	#N/A		
Add More Data Points if Appropriate				
5	#N/A	#N/A		
6	#N/A	#N/A		
7	#N/A	#N/A		
8	#N/A	#N/A		
9	#N/A	#N/A		
10	#N/A	#N/A		
11	#N/A	#N/A		
12	#N/A	#N/A		

Progress Monitoring Descriptions
*Interventions Implemented by Phase



Pioneer RESA example of Progress Monitoring (www.pioneerresa.org)



Week #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
Benchmark	67								73									75									81									85
Smith	18		21		24		25		24		24		28		31		37		42		43		41		42		49		52		59		62		66	
Intervention		Int. 1, Str.1				Int. 1, Str.2				Int.2, Str.1												Int. 2, Str.2						Int. 3, Str.1							
Notes	***Include skill deficit***																																			

Created by Pioneer RESA Data Services

Section 3.3 Differentiated Instruction

What is Differentiated Instruction and how does it fit with Response to Intervention?

Differentiated Instruction is a broad term referring to the need of educators to tailor the curriculum, teaching environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students. To differentiate instruction is to recognize students' varying interest, readiness levels, and learning profiles and to react responsively. There are four elements of the curriculum that can be differentiated: content, process, products, and learning environment.

(*From the Sacramento City Unified School District)*

Content:	Multiple options for taking in information
Process:	Multiple options for making sense of the ideas
Product:	Multiple options for expressing what they know
Environment:	Multiple arrangements and settings to foster engagement and relevance.

During Phases I-IV of GPS training, one day was devoted to differentiation. This information, from How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms by Carol Ann Tomlinson, was shared during GPS training:

Differentiated instruction is proactive.
Differentiated instruction is more qualitative than quantitative.
Differentiated instruction is rooted in assessment.
Differentiated instruction is student centered.
Differentiated instruction provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product.
Differentiated instruction is a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction.
Differentiated instruction is organic.

Section 3.4 Flexible Grouping

What is Flexible Grouping and how does it fit with Response to Intervention?

Flexible Grouping is a type of differentiation in which students are organized into groups based on interests and/or needs. Groups are not static, and teachers use data to establish and modify the composition of the student groups.

Within a standards-based classroom, flexible grouping may resemble other grouping strategies because students are sitting together. To implement flexible grouping with fidelity, teachers would use assessment data, based on the GPS, to organize for instruction during a period on any given day.

All students need access to grade level and/or content area GPS. During an instructional period, teachers may provide information to the entire class for a short period of time. Realizing that students need to interact with material in order to make meaning, the teacher would provide time for individual and/or group interaction. The teacher should group students together in a purposeful way to further support understanding. Flexible grouping, with fidelity, is the "how are they grouped?" part of grouping. The use of assessment data is the basis for these short term grouping formations. A clear instructional plan is needed to ensure the teaching and learning that occur in the group are targeted to student needs.

Section 3.5 Universal Screening

WHAT is universal screening?

Universal Screening is a general outcome measure used to identify underperforming students and to determine the rate of increase for the district, school, classroom, and student in reading and math. A Universal Screening will not identify why students are underperforming; rather it will identify which students are not at the expected performance criteria for a given grade level in reading and mathematics.

According to Jenkins (2007), the key feature in a screening measure is the accuracy in classifying a student as "at risk" or "not at risk". Additionally, a strong screener will address the issue of False Negatives, (students not identified as at risk who truly are at risk) and False Positives (students identified as at risk who are not). A system can risk wasting intervention resources if attention is not given to false positives and false negatives.

At the secondary level, schools should ensure screening tools are chosen that meet the criteria below. Understanding an adolescent's approach to this type of screening process will be important. While this assessment is not a grade, it is important to support students' understanding that their performance on this screener will identify classes that will be a part of their course of study during their high school years.

For a screening measure to be useful, it should satisfy three criteria (Jenkins, 2003):

- It needs to identify students who require further assessment.
- It needs to be practical.
- It needs to generate positive outcomes (accurately identifies students without consuming resources that could be put to better use).

Purpose of a Universal Screener from NASDSE (2005):

- Identify individuals in need of further assessment and possible movement to Tier 2 interventions
- Provide feedback about class performance to help school leadership identify when a teacher might require support
- If implemented on a regular basis across grade levels, it will identify false negatives; students who slip through the screening at one level but are then identified at later points in the year.

Georgia DOE Criteria for evaluating possible universal screeners:

- Easily Administered
- Research Based
- Highly correlated to skills being assessed
- Benchmark or predictor of future performance
- Reliability and Validity
- Sensitive to small increments of change
- Expected identified rates of increase
- Data analysis and reporting component

School administrators routinely review assessment data. The use of Georgia's summative assessments (EOCT, CRCT, and GHSGT) can be a part of the universal screening process. However, the use of additional screeners will be needed to ensure appropriate identification of individuals needing support. For example, the 8th grade CRCT should be reviewed by high schools and their feeder middle schools collaboratively. This process will help create an initial list of students potentially needing additional screening assessments immediately upon entering 9th grade. The 9th grade teachers and administrators should use a reading and/or mathematics screening tool designed to identify missing essential learning skills needed for success at the high school level.

WHEN do I administer a universal screening?

Universal screenings should be administered three times a year (fall, winter, spring) in reading and math. Data from universal screenings needs to be maintained in a system database that is used for decision making in instruction. Fuchs and Fuchs'(2007) recommendation is that schools use schoolwide screening in combination with at least five weeks of weekly progress monitoring in response to general education to identify underperforming students who require preventive intervention. **The Department recommends the use of a universal screening process three times per year.** The rationale is that a one-time universal screening at the beginning of the year can over-identify students who require preventative interventions.

The structure for administering a universal screener can vary by school and system. Approaches to implementing the universal screening process could include:

Elementary Level

- Teachers administer reading and math assessments, analyze results, and make collaborative decisions based on their schools problem solving model.
- Computer assisted assessment tools could allow for a classroom to complete an assessment at the same time
- SWAT – school wide assessment team could be used. Non classroom teachers and administrators are trained in the assessment, visit a classroom, and quickly assess all individuals in a timely fashion. SWAT could also be in the media center and classrooms visit on a rotational schedule.

Secondary Level

- Computer assisted assessment tools.
- SWAT – school wide assessment team could be used. Non classroom teachers and administrators are trained in the assessment, visit a classroom, and quickly assess all individuals in a timely fashion. SWAT could be in the media center and classrooms visit on a rotational schedule (ex. All 9th grade English classes are scheduled in the SWAT rotation).
- Mini assessments for students enrolling new to the school. While paperwork is completed by parents, students could complete a quick paper and pencil assessment.

At the secondary level, data from universal screenings should be shared with all content area teachers. For example, math, science, and social studies teachers should know immediately which students in their classes struggle with reading and comprehension. Since these classes have an increasing amount of reading embedded in the work, teachers need to be able to support student mastery and application of content. The conversations across content areas will allow ELA/reading teachers to identify reading instructional strategies for use in other content areas.

HOW do I interpret the results of a universal screening?

Schools and systems should set universal screening performance criteria to determine which students should be targeted for additional "detective work". This performance criteria should be connected to the Georgia Performance Standards for reading and math at a given grade level. All teachers should be involved in developing performance criteria to ensure a common understanding of expectations.

Systems and schools should have a data team/problem solving team that is responsible for analyzing the data from universal screenings relative to the skills to ascertain whether the data indicates curriculum, instruction or student issues. The team will use data during the year to monitor growth in terms of the rate of increase shown at the district, school, classroom, or student level. The data team is responsible for targeting the areas of needed improvement and working to address the specific issues related to those areas. Additionally, the data team will identify additional "detective work" assessments needed to determine the root cause of the identified underperformance. The results from these additional "detective

work" assessments will be used to identify specific instructional and/or behavioral interventions needed for individual/groups of students.

Local school norms are how a specific school performs on the universal screening data. Initially the school may need to develop local norms by looking at the school norms on the state assessments. Schools should look at their local norms in relation to the district and state norms and then determine a rate of increase.

Section 3.6 RTI and Behavior

It is important to begin this section on RTI and behavior by noting the relationship between academic performance and behavior. While most of the discussion here focuses on behavior in isolation, rarely does behavior occur without a relationship to the academic environment. The problematic behavior of many students is directly related to academic deficits and their desire to escape difficult tasks. Therefore it is essential that academic performance be reviewed and any deficits be addressed in conjunction with providing behavioral interventions. The following information is provided with the assumption that academic performance has been assessed and any identified deficits are being addressed through the RTI process.

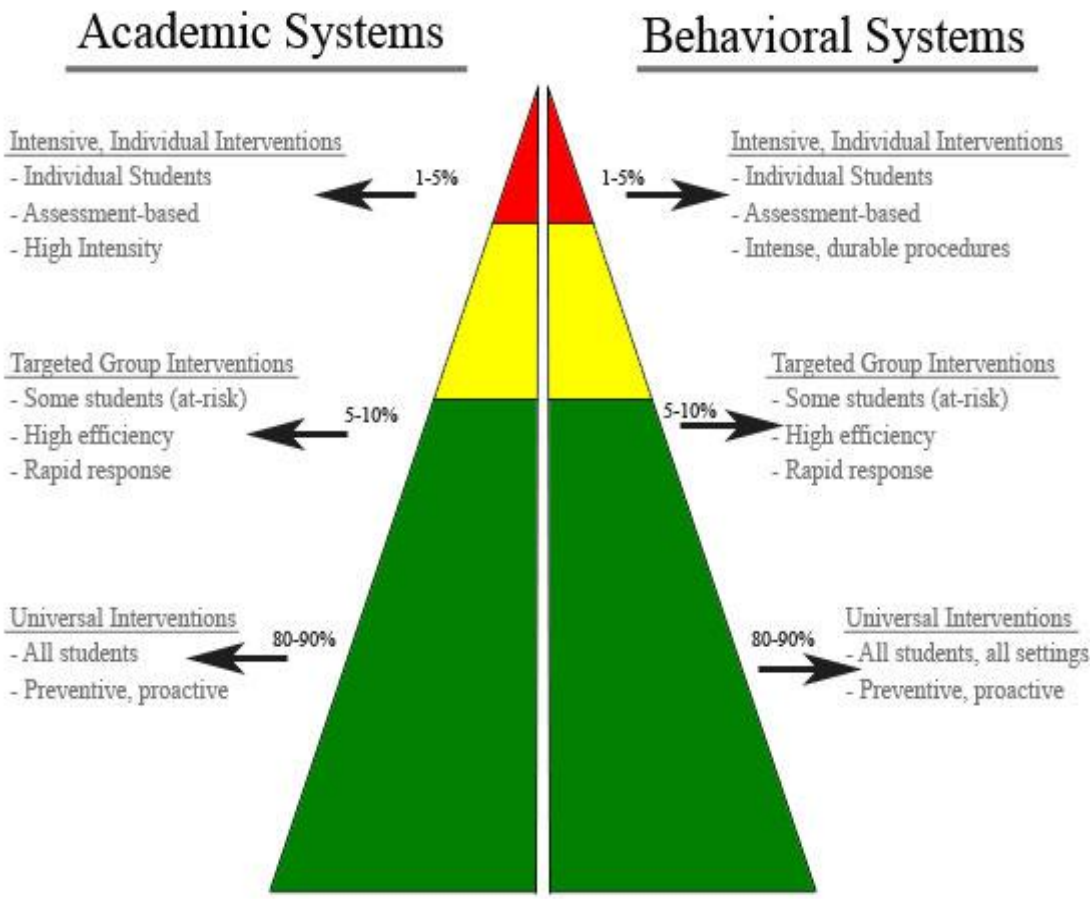
- The basis for RTI and behavior is the development and implementation of universal school-wide expectations, rules, and procedures which serve as the *standards* for behavior (Tier 1).
    - In this preventative approach, the expectations (*standards*) are then systematically taught to all students through lessons and demonstration similarly to the way reading or mathematics skills are taught.
    - Students achieving the behavior standards are recognized in the same way that grades and honor roll acknowledge students for academic success.
- The degree to which behavior reflects the school-wide standards is measured through data collection and analysis.
    - If the school-wide discipline plan is consistently and effectively being implemented, 80-90% of the students should respond positively.
    - If that is not the case, a problem solving approach would be utilized to identify possible barriers such as poor instruction, inconsistent implementation of the school-wide plan, or lack of fidelity of implementation.
    - If none of those barriers are identified, a universal intervention such as modifying the plan would be appropriate.
- When 80-90% of students are responding positively to the school-wide plan, schools can begin to identify those students who may need more support.
    - By collecting and analyzing behavior data, school teams can identify the students needing intervention and the specific behavior skills which must be targeted.
    - The most common data used for decision making at this level is office discipline referrals (ODRs).
    - The data may also indicate specific classrooms or locations where most discipline referrals are most frequent, indicating a need for more support in those areas.
    - This data will enable schools to identify students with externalizing behavior but does not always identify students with internalizing behavior or less severe behavior.
    - Schools may develop a screening measure to identify at-risk students in these categories, and at this time the most common screener used is teacher identification.
- Once students have been identified through data analysis or screening, Tier 2 evidence-based interventions are provided.
    - Targeting skills, providing interventions, and monitoring progress for small groups of students may include re-teaching and practice of specific behaviors (i.e. waiting for a turn, walking quietly in the halls, riding the bus), development of appropriate social skills (i.e. asking for help, responding to negative comments from others, making friends), or following school procedures (i.e. getting to class on time, following cafeteria rules, using the media center).
    - Examples of more interventions may be found at the Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) website at www.pbis.org.
    - The progress of students involved in these Tier 2 interventions should be closely monitored and may involve teacher checklists, ODRs, or rating scales.

- Tier 3 interventions should include a more in depth analysis of a student's behavioral problems which would include a thorough review of all previous interventions and may include a functional behavioral assessment.
    - The SST team may also conclude that additional information is necessary and further assessment may be required (behavior checklists, behavior rating scales, etc.).
    - Academic assessments may also be completed as the link between academic deficits and behavior problems cannot be ignored.
- The approach to behavioral interventions at Tier 3 mirrors academics and should provide individualized interventions and progress monitoring.
    - While a student may continue with Tier 2 interventions, a Behavior Intervention Plan may be developed based on the information gathered through a functional behavior assessment.
    - More frequent progress monitoring would occur to enable the SST team to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

How is a universal screening process connected to behavior? Universal screenings are an important part of any school wide discipline plan. Analysis of disciplinary infraction data will yield broad based areas of focus for any school. While a paper and pencil assessment is not appropriate in this type of screening, the use of existing documentation, including student and teacher interviews, will support the development of behavioral expectations and identify targeted areas of improvement.

In this widely recognized model of Response to Intervention by Dr. George Sugai, the right side is dedicated to student behavior. While Georgia utilizes a four tiered pyramid, the implications of this example are appropriate for schools engaged in the work addressing behavior and its impact on learning.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention
by George Sugai, Ph.D. University of Connecticut, Storrs
OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Center for Behavioral Education and Research



More detailed information and examples of behavioral interventions may be found in the following resources:

Georgia's Positive Behavior Support web page:
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCPBS

National Technical Assistance Center on
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) **www.pbis.org**

What Works Cearinghouse **http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/**

Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary Classroom:
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/index.asp#be_pg

Response to Intervention and Positive Behavior Support: Brothers from Different Mothers or Sisters from Different Misters?
http://pbis.org/news/New/Newsletters/Newsletter4-2.aspx

The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements (IRIS-II) Vanderbilt University (VU) and its new partner, Claremont Graduate University (CGU). **http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/**

Chapter 4 – Standards-Based Learning

Section 4.1 Tier 1

STANDARDS-BASED CLASSROOM LEARNING:

All students participate in general education learning that includes:

- Universal screenings to target groups in need of specific instructional support.
- Implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) through a standards based classroom structure.
- Differentiation of instruction including fluid, flexible grouping, multiple means of learning, and demonstration of learning.
- Progress monitoring of learning through multiple formative assessments.

Standards-based classroom learning describes effective instruction that should be happening in all classrooms for all students.

- As Georgia moves towards full implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), it is recognized that the curriculum standards are the foundation for the learning that occurs in each classroom for all students.
- Standards-based learning environments, implemented with fidelity, are necessary to ensure all students have access to quality instruction. (See SBC rubric appendix) This fidelity of implantation ensures that 80-100% of students are successful in the general education classroom.
- Instruction and learning focus on the GPS and include evidence-based instruction that is differentiated according to students' various needs.
- Tier 1 is not limited to instruction in the academic content areas, but also includes all developmental domains such as behavioral and social development.
- Teachers utilize common formative assessment results and analysis of student work to guide and adjust instruction. Schools should identify common formative assessments and a common protocol for analyzing and recording student progress.
    - Common Formative Assessments
        - Formative assessments will be used in all classrooms for all students. To answer DuFours' questions, "How will we know when each student has learned it," the use of common formative assessments will be necessary for teacher groups to discuss student learning.
        - All teachers in all classrooms should use a variety of formative assessment strategies to continuously know individual student achievement.
        - The assessment process needs to be consistent among the teachers in a grade level/department.
        - Common formative assessments will be the glue that binds groups of teachers together to discuss teaching and learning.
- Data from formative assessments should guide immediate decision making on instructional next steps.
    - Differentiation of Instruction refers to the need for educators to tailor curriculum, teaching environments, and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for students based on frequent assessments.
    - Flexible Groups are used to organize students for instruction based on need. Groups are not static, and teachers use frequent formative assessments to establish and modify the composition of groups.
- Tier 1 represents effective, strategic, and expert instruction that is available in all classrooms. The use of effective questioning skills is critical to responding to student performance. Bloom's Taxonomy should guide the types of questions asked by teachers for student feedback.

- Focused attention to content knowledge of teachers will be required to support appropriate teacher questioning and feedback skills.
- Rigorous instruction based on the GPS is required. Vertical (across grade level) instructional conversations will support and challenge all teachers to provide instruction where students demonstrate depth of understanding, including such cognitive processes as explanation, interpretation, application, analysis of perspectives, empathy, and self knowledge. Alignment of instruction and assessment based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the GPS will ensure student access to an appropriate rigorous instructional program.

The Department recommends districts and schools maintain a deep focus on the development of standards-based learning environments in all classrooms.

Student Movement to Tier 2

- System and/or school benchmark assessments are used to determine student progress toward grade level mastery of the GPS.
- The universal screening process is used to identify students requiring additional "detective work" assessments in reading, math, and/or behavior. These additional assessments ensure accurate identification of struggling students or students not performing at expected levels.
- Students identified are placed in Tier 2 interventions that supplement the Tier 1 classroom.
- During the instructional year, Tier 1 progress monitoring is used in the classroom as a part of standards-based instruction. As student assessment data indicate a need for Tier 2 support, the data team will follow school-created procedures for decision making. Three important questions must be addressed to determine the reason for the need for additional support:
    - Is the learning concern a curriculum issue?
    - Is the learning concern an instructional issue?
    - Is the learning concern a student issue?

  The questions should be addressed in the order listed.
- Movement between Tier 1 and Tier 2 is fluid and flexible. Adequate time should be given for the Tier 1 instructional program to be implemented before determining Tier 2 supported is needed. However, common sense is critical in assessing student performance and individual responses to Tier 1 instruction (i.e.; a student with a documented visual impairment would be provided interventions immediately).

What does Tier 1 look like in action?

Examples of Tier 1	Non-examples of Tier 1
Fifth grade students work on the Revolutionary War. Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches to support struggling readers, support English language learners, and support advanced learners within the classroom.	Kindergarten teachers give colleagues copies of weekly activities and center projects.
Ninth grade Mathematics I teachers use short term flexible grouping to support students struggling with function tables. Students are identified based on a common assessment. Students move between rooms during a class period for a predetermined amount of time. Further common assessments are used to determine progress.	First grade teachers administer a running record three times a year. Results of first running record are used to create reading groups. Reading groups progress through the basal. Second running record at mid-year is used to reorganize reading groups for continued basal work.
Biology teachers collaboratively create common assessments. Data from common assessments is shared to identify students needing support. Data from common assessments is used as a spring board for teacher discussions about instruction and learning.	Accelerated Math II teachers administer county benchmarks and report results to department chair. Students are not informed of progress. Teaching team does not review data.
Eighth grade students participate in a writing universal screening in August to help teachers identify individuals not meeting predetermined expectations and those surpassing predetermined expectations.	Seventh grade Science teachers assign a five page written report on human genetics. Evaluation rubric assesses content only.

Chapter 5 – Needs Based Learning

Section 5.1 Tier 2

NEEDS BASED LEARNING:

In addition to Tier 1, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including:

- Standard intervention protocol process for identifying and providing research based interventions based on need and resources.
- On-going progress monitoring to measure student response to intervention and guide decision-making.

- Tier 2 becomes the answer to the question "what are we prepared to do when they do not learn?"
- Using universal screening data, summative assessment data, and Tier 1 formative assessment data, teachers and instructional leaders should determine concepts, content areas, and/or specific skills needing support.
- Interventions should be developed and made available when specific students show weaknesses in those areas.
- All students who need Tier 2 intervention (in addition to Tier 1 instruction) should be identified through the universal screening and formative assessment protocol.
- A school wide understanding of assessment data and projected levels of student mastery during the school year is required for effective Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction in all content areas.
- Tier 2 interventions should be in place for students who are not being sufficiently successful or adequately challenged with Tier 1 interventions alone.
- Tier 2 interventions should be pre-planned, developed, and supported at the school level, thereby becoming "standard intervention protocols" that are proactively in place for students who need them.
- Tier 2 interventions are not a substitution for Tier 1 instruction, but are layered in addition to the Tier 1 instruction that is provided.
- Schools should determine concepts and content areas that are likely to have been mastered by highly able students and, through strategies such as pretesting and curriculum compacting, be prepared to provide acceleration.
- Tier 2 interventions should not be endless for individual students who are struggling. Schools must ensure that specific students are not labeled as being "Tier 2 students" and thereby create lower expectations or "tracking" for those students.
- Progress monitoring should be used for identified students involved in Tier 2 to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. Attention to transfer of learning to the Tier 1 core classroom should be considered.
- The collaboration between the Tier 2 intervention teacher and Tier 1 classroom teacher(s) should be frequent and focused on progress monitoring data.
  - Collaborative discussion and planning will support transfer of learning.
  - Collaborative discussion and planning will support appropriate and rigorous instruction in the intervention class.
  - Collaborative discussion and planning will create the language of a common instructional focus.
- Specific academic interventions should be established for students who are missing core academic skills (e.g. strong reading skills) that will increase the probability that these high risk students will have the necessary skills to be successful.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts and schools monitor the transfer of learning from all interventions to the Tier 1 general classroom.

Student Movement to Tier 3

- The data team will confirm the fidelity of implementation of the intervention through frequent contact and observation during instruction.
- Additional Tier 2 interventions may be required if little or no progress is documented. The data team will follow previously established protocols to determine if additional Tier 2 interventions should be implemented.
- After the appropriate amount of time (time in weeks dependent on the intervention), the data team should assess student progress and determine if continued support through Tier 2 is required, additional Tier 2 interventions are required, or if Tier 3 support, in addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2, is required.

What does Tier 2 look like in action?

Examples of Tier 2	**Non-examples of Tier 2**
Mathematics I Support Class implemented with dedicated time for Support Class teacher and Mathematics I teacher to routinely collaborate.	Mathematics I: Algebra/Geometry/Statistics Support Class taught in isolation with no connection to Mathematics I: Algebra/Geometry/Statistics general classroom instruction.
Sixth grade students needing support in application of reading skills to content material attend a Reading Connection class. Pre-identified strategies are reinforced by Connections teachers and supported by classroom teachers. Assessments are used to determine evidence of application of skills to content reading.	Third grade students are placed in a reading group outside the classroom. This reading group is the student's only access to reading instruction during the school day.
EIP second graders receive additional support on targeted skills during independent learning center work time.	Data from eighth grade math students' computer based Connections class remains in the Connections room.
Fourth grade small group math students take frequent assessments. Data is used to show student growth or lack of growth. Continued use of a particular intervention is based on student performance.	Primary student's additional interventions are determined by the teacher's observations only.

Chapter 6 – SST Driven Learning

Section 6.1 Tier 3

SST-DRIVEN LEARNING:

In addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2, targeted students participate in learning that is different by including:

- Intensive, formalized problem solving to identify individual student needs.
- Targeted research based interventions tailored to individual needs.
- Frequent progress monitoring and analysis of student response to intervention(s).

- Tier 3 in Georgia is a unique individual, diagnostic, data driven instructional problem solving process where the question about a student expands to include the "why" as well as the "what". This is the point where specialists (school psychologists, intervention specialists, behavior specialists, counselors, social workers, speech-language pathologists, etc.) often participate in the problem solving process if they have not already been involved at Tiers 1 and 2.
- Problem solving at this stage is more in depth and intensive and usually requires gathering and analyzing additional information about the student, his/her performance strengths and weaknesses, background information, etc.
- Appraisal of various types is usually initiated by the SST team, including vision and hearing testing. Whereas Tier 2's supplemental activities will have been programs designed to strengthen targeted skills for a range of students, the Tier 3/SST process employs scientific analysis to discover the reason(s) for an individual student's difficulties. This knowledge guides the design of individualized interventions that attempt to best fit the student.
- Many students will be satisfactorily helped by the careful analysis and interventions of the Tier 3/SST process. Their cases will revert to Tier 2 or Tier 1 with the benefit of key discoveries that have enabled the student to experience success. These may be in academics or in behavior, and often in both.
- In rare cases, some students may present problems for which even the most effective known interventions appear to be inadequate. It is a combination of supporting data and use of professional judgment as to when or if their cases are referred for a comprehensive evaluation to investigate for a possible disability. One alternative might be to pursue Section 504 eligibility and its individual accommodation plan.

Uniqueness of Tier 3/SST in Georgia: the Marshall Court commitment

- In 1984, the state of Georgia resolved a class-action court case, Marshall vs. Georgia, with a set of actions that it committed to federal district court to implement permanently.
- One of the commitments was that a Student Support Team (SST) would be required in every public school in Georgia. Thus, no matter the current and future organizational framework of Georgia education, there will always be a requirement for at least one Student Support Team (SST) in every public school.
- The exact language of the state's court commitment regarding Student Support Teams is reproduced in Appendix [X]
- At that time, the single, formal avenue to individual help was a referral to Special Education. The SST was intended to fill this gap in services, thus *SST's original purpose was to prevent inappropriate referral to Special Education.*
- In contrast, there are occasionally situations that are so compellingly appropriate for Special Education that it would be unacceptable to delay needed services by having to go through SST processes. The State Board rule allows for exceptions to SST in such cases, and a referral to Special Education is initiated immediately. (See Appendix) Interventions should be put in place during the evaluation process.

How is SST different now as compared to pre-RTI/Pyramid/IDEA 2004?

- SST still has, and will always have, its core mission of providing an individualized, diagnostic analysis and intervention for students. But now that there will be a set of RTI procedures in place in Tiers 1 and 2, many of the routine causes of underperformance will be formally addressed earlier than before. This will, in effect, screen them and allow the SST to do a more thorough job on a smaller but needier set of cases. SST has already incorporated RTI as a necessary process when a possibility exists for an eventual diagnosis of Specific Learning Disability under IDEA 2004 rules. With the full use of the Pyramid of Interventions structure, RTI will be even more central to the functioning of the team, particularly in more extensive progress monitoring, documentation of results and analysis.

Issues and Procedures in Tier 3/SST

- The appraisal nature of SST lent itself not only to preventing inappropriate referrals (by solving problems) but also to helping meet a requirement for those that were indeed appropriate. That is, Special Education law required that schools must prove that regular education is unable, with commonly accepted and well documented interventions, to solve the student's problem; therefore, Special Education was indicated.
- This requirement still exists today, and SST's role in Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions still addresses it. But SST is no longer the sole generator of evaluative and performance data. Some of its functions are being embraced by Tiers 1 and 2, so that by the time SST actively addresses a student case, there is substantial data already available.
- The most recent reauthorization of IDEA states not only that a student's response to intervention must not only be allowable as a component of eligibility, but also that the interventions themselves must have been proven effective. Thus, if a student had not had a fair chance to learn in response to solid teaching, then it would be premature to fault the student or suspect a disability. This is a critical consideration in our on-going attempts to remedy the problem of disproportionate placement of minorities in Special Education. [Note: a unique subset of this is the case of English Language Learners. *See Chapter 8.]*
- In any given school or school system, there must be accountability for the soundness of the data gathered on a student in Tiers 1 and 2 before the case can proceed to the SST.
- Interventions must have been implemented with *fidelity,* that is, consistently implemented following the delivery method and program originator's design (time, frequency, etc). Tier 3/SST must verify the integrity of existing data. Some cases will require extensive evaluation at Tier 3/SST; others will already have substantial, verified data that can help guide the team's intervention design.
- Once an intervention is initiated, at least four data points, and preferably many more, will need to be generated to measure progress. Best practice supports progress monitoring the student's response to the intervention one to three times per week.
- At Tier 3, the length of the intervention will vary by case, but most cases will occur over a six to twelve week period. For students who may eventually be considered for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) eligibility, note that the required time period for data collection is twelve weeks. Interventions must be implemented for 12 weeks before a student can eventually be found eligible for special education services for a learning disability, but it does not all have to take place in Tier 3/SST. Additional weeks of interventions can take place during the specified evaluation period for special education eligibility. Interventions from Tier 2 may also count toward the required 12 weeks for students being considered for SLD eligibility. For students being considered for eligibility in areas other than SLD, the key consideration is that interventions have been given a reasonable amount of time to work and that there are enough data

points over time to provide a sound basis for making decisions about how the student is responding to the intervention.

- Prior to the widespread use of the RTI process, it was not uncommon for certain students to be on the active SST caseload for more than a year. With differentiated instruction, RTI and the expanded options for skill strengthening in Tiers 1 and 2, the typical time of active SST status should be substantially less.

Referral from Tier 3/SST to Special Education evaluation

- Tier 2 and to an extent Tier 3 try to address systemic, institutional factors related to a student's situation in order to fill gaps, strengthen skills, engender confidence, and find a new way of successful functioning by the student.
- The Tier 3/SST team must go beyond that and consider that there may be one or more factors *internal* to the student (e.g., needs, fears, attitudes, serious weaknesses, processing problems) that are the primary reasons for lack of adequate success.
- If the team finds solutions for these supposed factors, then the student proceeds back down the pyramid tiers to on-going progress. The Tier 3/SST team closes the case and terminates it from their active caseload.
- But if after educational/behavioral evaluation, analysis, and intervention their best efforts at remediation repeatedly fail, then they must consider that the student may have a disability. It is at that point that a referral for a Special Education comprehensive evaluation is appropriate.
- Subsequently, due process determines the path of the case, but the student still needs instructional support during the evaluation-eligibility period.
- It is important to note that this is not to say that the SST team has, by referring, *diagnosed* a disability. However, it is also not their prerogative to decline to refer a student because they doubt that the student would qualify for a disability category.
- In some cases, students may not meet special education eligibility criteria. The student may return to Tier 3/SST team because eligibility was denied for Special Education.
- Cases where severity or type of condition does not qualify for Special Education must still be addressed as best as possible. This is where the team would want to consider possible eligibility for Section 504. In such a case, it may be that a Section 504 Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) can be crafted that will effectively diminish the effects of the student's condition. Here, the legal issue is not reaching individual goals in the classroom, but having an equal *opportunity* to do so that is comparable to that of the student's nondisabled peers. It would be up to a Section 504 evaluation team to decide whether to pursue this course of action. In some systems, the SST team is assigned to be that team.

Referral from Tier 3/SST to ESOL Evaluation

- Tier 2 and to an extent, Tier 3, try to address systemic, institutional factors related to a student's situation in order to fill gaps, strengthen skills, engender confidence, and find a new way of successful functioning by the student.
- The Tier 3/SST team must go beyond that and consider that there may be one or more factors *internal* to the student (e.g., needs, fears, attitudes, serious weaknesses, processing problems) that are the primary reasons for lack of adequate success.
- If the team can find solutions for these supposed factors, then the student can proceed back down the pyramid tiers to on-going progress. The Tier 3/SST team closes the case and terminates it from their active caseload.
- The Tier 3/SST team must determine if an English language learner (ELL) exhibits a language difficulty or a language disorder. A language delay or difficulty must be present in both languages to be considered as a possible disability

- The Tier 3/SST team must determine if a speech language impairment adversely affect the educational performance of the student and only if there is evidence to support this would the Tier 3/SST team refer the student for additional evaluation.
- If after educational/behavioral evaluation, analysis and intervention their best efforts at remediation repeatedly fail, then the team must consider that the child may have a disability. It is at that point that a referral for a Special Education comprehensive evaluation is appropriate.
- Subsequently, due process determines the path of the case but the student still needs instructional support during the evaluation-eligibility period.
- It is important to note that this is not to say that the SST team has, by referring, *diagnosed* a disability. However, it is also not their prerogative to decline to refer a student because they doubt that the student would qualify for a disability category.
- In some cases, students may not meet special education eligibility criteria. The student may return to Tier 3/SST team because eligibility was denied for Special Education.
- Cases where severity or type of condition does not qualify for Special Education must still be addressed as best as possible. This is where the team would want to consider possible eligibility for Section 504. In such a case, it may be that a Section 504 Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) can be crafted that will effectively diminish the effects of the student's condition. Here, the legal issue is not reaching individual goals in the classroom, but having an equal *opportunity* to do so that is comparable to that of the student's nondisabled peers. It would be up to a Section 504 evaluation team to decide whether to pursue this course of action. In some systems, the SST team is assigned to be that team.

Examples of Tier 3/SST	**Non-examples of Tier 3 SST**
Student is given additional drill and practice on specific area(s) of weakness in math which were targeted after an analysis of several formative assessments and interviews with the student. Progress toward goal is graphed on a weekly basis.	Student is given extra work in specific area(s) of math weakness.
Student is given a diagnostic reading test to determine specific instructional needs. A plan for the student is developed which recommends continuing the current Tier 2 reading intervention with the addition of tutoring sessions (3x a week) focused on his primary weakness. Progress monitoring established in Tier 2 is continued in Tier 3 with greater frequency.	Student is given additional reading assignments in lower level readers.
Data shared by teacher on the student's classroom behavior after trying several behavioral strategies led the team to develop an individualized student behavior management plan. After five days of gathering baseline data, the teacher will implement the plan as developed. SST member is assigned to follow-up with teacher to answer any questions on data time sampling and to check fidelity of implementation.	Misbehaving student is moved to front of class. Teacher is directed to increase eye contact with student in order to decrease behavior incidents. Teacher is asked to keep data.
Student homework notebook is created with sections for assignments, teacher signatures, parent signatures. Student is assigned a mentor who checks notebook at school each morning and at end of day. Mentor instructs student in the use of an organizational protocol for classroom work and homework. Protocol shared with parent. Together, student and mentor track (progress monitor) the effectiveness of the intervention.	Parent is instructed to make sure student completes homework assignments.
Team invites school psychologist to consult on case to discuss threshold for suspecting a disability as primary cause.	Team refers student for consideration of special education eligibility without involving school psychologist.

Tier 3/SST Records

According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), any records that a system officially maintains on a student that could be shared with others for the purpose of educating the student are, *collectively*, the student's cumulative folder, permanent record, etc. This includes SST records. It does not matter how widely the records may be scattered throughout the school or school system—they all are part of the student's record, and therefore are: 1.) accessible to parents and 2.) confidential.

When may SST records be purged? The answer may lie in the system's Records Retention Schedule, where it can specify a time period after which they should be removed and destroyed (i.e., when they are no longer useful). If not addressed there, then they are a permanent part of the student's record and should follow the student from school to school. They can only be destroyed when the rest of the records are thus scheduled. Obviously, it would be beneficial to include them in a system's Records Retention Schedule, which can be done by the local Board of Education.

When are SST records no longer useful? This varies from case to case, but it is fair to assume that the findings of the SST are only useful for a limited time. As students mature and consolidate skills, their SST records are of diminishing usefulness to subsequent teachers. This is more pronounced the younger the student was when the process occurred. Whatever decision a system makes about the "shelf life" of SST records, it must be consistent, not arbitrary.

Additional Information: http://www.gadoe.org/tss_learning.aspx?PageReq=TSSLearningSupport

Chapter 7 – Specially-Designed Learning

Section 7.1 Tier 4

SPECIALLY-DESIGNED LEARNING:

In addition to Tiers 1 through 3, targeted students participate in :

- Specialized programs, methodologies, or instructional deliveries.
- Greater frequency of progress monitoring of student response to intervention(s).

Tier 4 is developed for students who need additional supports and meet eligibility criteria for special program placement including gifted education and special education. With three effective tiers in place prior to specialized services, more struggling students will be successful and will not require this degree of intervention. Tier 4 does not represent a location for services, but indicates a layer of interventions that may be provided in the general education class or in a separate setting. For students with disabilities needing special education and related services, Tier 4 provides instruction that is targeted and specialized to meet students' needs. If a child has already been determined as a child with a disability, then the school system should not require additional documentation of prior interventions in the effect the child demonstrates additional delays. The special education instruction and documentation of progress in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) will constitute prior interventions and appropriate instruction. In some cases, the student may require a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility of additional disability areas.

Guiding Questions in Implementing Tier 4 Interventions:

- Are only those students who need specially designed instruction placed in specialized programs?
- Are data collection and progress monitoring clearly defined?
- Are goals for students clearly defined and measurable?
- Are services and methodology distinctly different from those provided in the general education environment?
- Is consideration given to ensuring placement in the least restrictive environment?
- Who is responsible for the delivery, monitoring, and recording of the intervention results?

English Language Learners

Although the nature of the RTI Pyramid indicates all students begin at Tier 1 and move upward through the tiers only if the interventions at the previous tiers are not sufficient to allow them to achieve, Title III under NCLB does not permit delayed eligibility testing for language minority students. Neither should language assistance be delayed in order to allow students to progress "normally" through the tiers.

Eligibility for ESOL services automatically should be considered a Tier 4 Intervention. For the purposes of serving the student effectively and efficiently, the language minority student enters the Pyramid at the Tier 4 and as the student progresses with language development and academic proficiency, the level of interventions needed to support the student will decrease accordingly.
(More information in Chapter 8)

Gifted Learners

Advanced learning needs can be addressed in the general education classroom by providing instructional interventions prior to identifying students for specialized educational services. By documenting instructional interventions, the RTI process allows high-achieving students access to differentiated curriculum, flexible pacing, cluster grouping, and other universal interventions available to all students in the regular classroom. Data teams should determine additional interventions needed to meet individual accelerated learning needs during analysis of progress monitoring of student response to the intervention. Additional interventions should be considered to meet the individuals accelerated learning needs. These additional interventions could include gifted program services. An important consideration for the team is determining that interventions have been given a reasonable amount of time to work. Also, data points over time need to provide a sound basis for making decisions about how the student is responding to the intervention.
(More information in Chapter 8)

Special Education

Special education eligibility and the required pre-referral process are intended to support the practice of providing high quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction, and applying child response data to important educational decisions. This framework should guide eligibility teams in applying decisions to general, remedial and special education, creating a well integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by child outcome data.

To obtain child outcome data, a multi-tier system of intervention options is necessary as a means to integrate educational problem-solving across educational levels. Multi-tiered systems of interventions are consistent with federal legislation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Actions IDEA 2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB 2001)) and evidence-based research. The purpose of these laws is to produce better outcomes for all children and to apply procedures with strong scientific bases to a wide range of decisions, including determination of eligibility for all disability areas (e.g., speech-language impairment, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disability, emotional and behavioral disorder, intellectual disability, speech/language impairment, significantly developmental disorder, other health impairment, etc.).

- The Department frequently receives questions about timelines for eligibility determination related to RTI. As stated in Tier 3, the length of an intervention will vary by case, but most cases will occur over a six to twelve week period. For students being considered for eligibility in areas other than SLD, the key consideration is that interventions have been given a reasonable amount of time to work and that there are enough data points over time to provide a sound basis for making decisions about how the student is responding to the intervention.

- The Department also receives questions about vision and hearing screenings. Typically, these are obtained in Tier 3, but it may be beneficial to screen vision and hearing in Tier 2 to rule out possible sensory issues which could have an impact on the student's response to interventions.

- Parents maintain their due process right to request an evaluation. However, eligibility for special education should not be considered without documentation of prior instructional interventions. A Student Support Team bypass procedure does exist (see Georgia Rule 160-4-2-.32) for rare cases when indicated by the severity of the disability or extreme circumstances.

For students who may eventually be considered for Specific Learning Disabilities eligibility:

Note that the required time period is twelve weeks. Interventions must be implemented for 12 weeks before a student can eventually be found eligible for special education services for a learning disability, but it does not all have to take place in Tier 3/SST. Additional weeks of interventions can take place during the specified evaluation period for Special Ed eligibility. Interventions from Tier 2 may also count toward the required 12 weeks for students being considered for SLD eligibility.

Additional Information:

English Language Learners:	1. See Section 8.1 of this document 2. http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_esol.aspx
Gifted Education:	1. See Section 8.2 of this document 2. http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_gifted.aspx
Special Education:	http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCImpMan

Chapter 8 – Interventions and Programs

Section 8.1 Evidence-Based Interventions

The interventions used at Tiers 2-4 should supplement the learning that is occurring in the Tier 1 classroom, address identified weaknesses in basic skills, and accelerate learning toward individual expectations. Continuous monitoring of the implementation of the intervention (fidelity) and progress monitoring data is critical to determining the impact on student achievement.

Schools have the responsibility to use scientifically validated (research and evidence-based) intervention methods to prevent wasting time and effort and to give students the best chance to be successful (Wright, 2007).

Specialized interventions may include research or evidence-based interventions which are specialized in being specific to identifying certain individual students or groups of students with specific types of academic and behavioral problems. The two programs requiring research based and evidence-based practices are the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) reauthorization of 2004 (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Research based and evidence-based interventions are evaluated with sound experimental designs that result in providing evidence of socially significant behavior changes.

A sound experimental design would include:

- Clearly defined dependent variable/intervention and data(s)
- Set of procedures to consistently implement the independent variable (highly specific, replicable directions, steps and procedures.)
- A design that controls for threats to internal validity (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005)

Key components to gauge interventions also include analysis of both previously conducted research that supports the intervention and review of current research that documents intervention effectiveness.

There are three elements that integrate research and evidence-based interventions:

1. Requirement for the use of scientifically based instructional/intervention practices
2. Evaluation and documentation of how a student responds to intervention
3. Emphasis on the use of data for decision making at each step (Brown-Chidesy & Steege, 2005)

Interventions can be categorized into three groups: scientifically proven, research based, and evidence-based.

Scientifically proven interventions mean that scientific results have already been published in peer-reviewed journals using the scientific rigor described in the definition from NCLB (see chapter 3).

Research based interventions mean the methods, content, materials, etc. were developed in guidance from the collective research and scientific community.

Evidence-based interventions indicate that specific data is available that shows the intervention improves student outcomes.

Interventions at Tier 1 include the instructional practices in use in the general education classroom. Teachers routinely address student needs and environmental factors to create the optimal learning

environment. Tier 1 interventions include seating arrangements, fluid and flexible grouping, lesson pacing, collaborative work, demonstrations of learning, differentiation of instruction, and student feedback. Responding to student performance is a critical element of all classroom learning environments. The teacher's ability to identify areas of focus, scaffold the learning for the individual to reach the expectation, and support the solidification of new learning behaviors is vital to student success.

Interventions at Tier 2 are typically standard protocols employed by the school to address the learning and/or behavioral needs of identified students. These protocols are typically implemented in a specific sequence, based on the resources available in the school. For example, at Georgia Middle School, students who are identified as needing additional reading support will go to a reading intervention during Connections. During the intervention, the teacher uses specific research based practices to address the group's reading needs while keeping a clear focus on the GPS, grade level expectations in the content areas, and transfer of learning to the general classroom. **Collaboration between the intervention teacher and the general teacher team is required.** During the intervention, progress monitoring is used to determine the student's response to the intervention. The progress monitoring tool and frequency of implementation are collaboratively determined by the teaching team and the intervention teacher. Based on the progress monitoring data, the school standard protocol process may require individual students to continue in the intervention, move to another Tier 2 intervention, or move to Tier 1 interventions. For a few students, the data team may consider the need for Tier 3 interventions based on individual responses to Tier 2 interventions.

Interventions at Tier 3 are tailored to the individual, and in some cases small group. The SST should choose interventions based on evidence-based protocols and aggressively monitor the students response the intervention and the transfer of learning to the general classroom.

Interventions at Tier 4 are specially designed to meet the learning needs of the individual. These specially designed interventions are based on the GPS and the individual learning and/or behavioral needs of the individual.

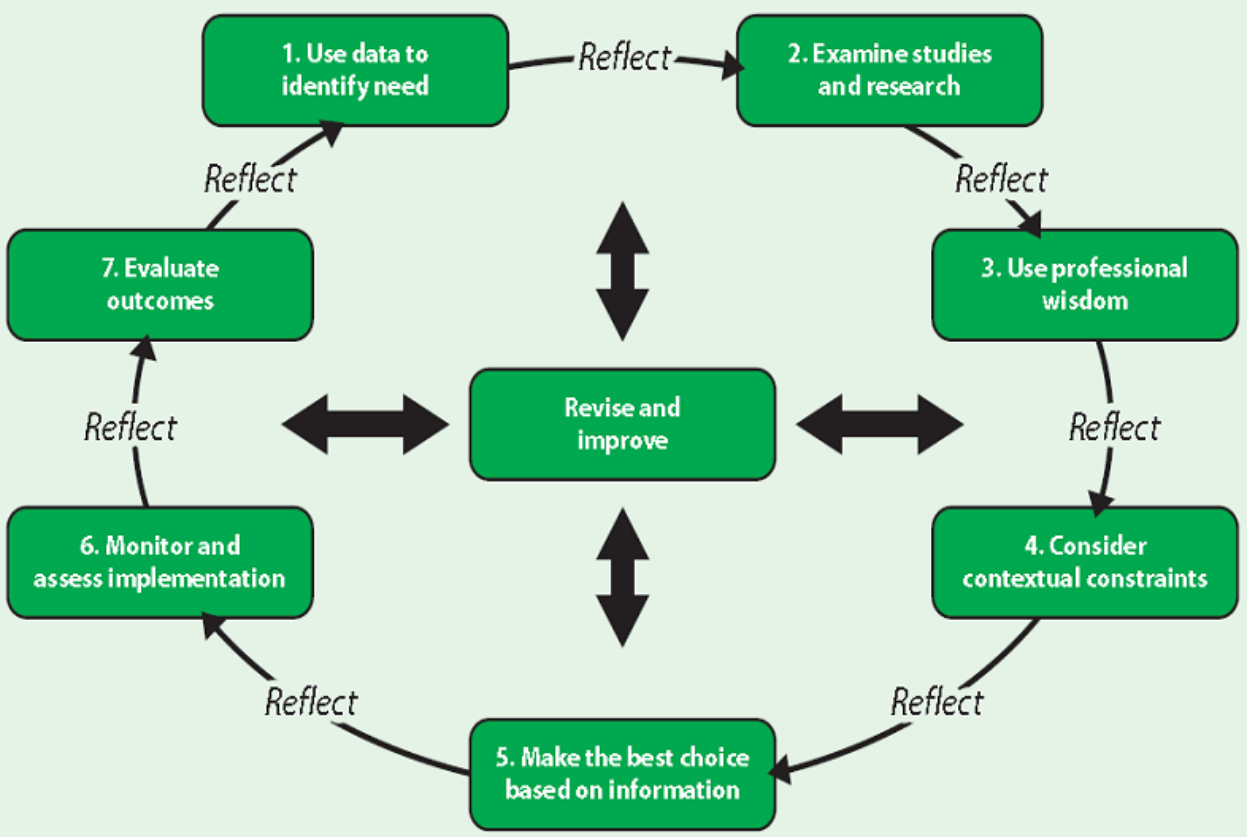
Georgia Department of Education Resources available to support teachers and students:

- Keys to Quality
  - Research based instructional strategies
  - Professional learning resources
  - Implementation Resource Guide
- GeorgiaStandards.Org
  - Frameworks
  - Tasks
  - Videos
- The Learning Village
  - Math I teachers supports
  - Destination Math
- Online Assessment System
  - Assessment items for progress monitoring
- Georgia Virtual School (GAVS)

The Department encourages districts to use these protocols to provide a common framework for choosing evidence-based interventions:

- Evidence-Based Decision Making Cycle: Shows the process that teams can utilize to integrate the use of data and research into the decision-making cycle.
- Critical Reading Protocol for Studies about Interventions: Provides a framework (in conjunction with the Types of Research Methods tool) for assessing the quality and rigor of a research study on an intervention.
- Intervention Review Protocol: Provides a framework (in conjunction with the Types of Research Methods and Critical Reading Protocol tools) for the review of all available information on an intervention, including research studies, to support decisions about the selection of interventions.
- Types of Research Methods: Provides an overview of the types of research methods used in research on interventions, and compares their level of rigor in determining "what works."

Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Cycle



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Critical Reading Protocol for Studies about Interventions

Directions: Review the study with a highlighter in hand to note interesting and/or relevant information. As you answer the questions below, please also note any questions the study raises or any other information you might need to know.

1. Authorship: Who is the author? Is it the vendor or a third party? Who funded the study? Is there an obvious bias?
Tip: Third party studies often find lower impacts than studies done by the vendor. It is also important to critically read reports or stories about studies.

2. Sample: How closely do the participants in the study mirror your population?
Tip: The more closely the characteristics of the participants in the study resemble the characteristics of your districts, schools, teachers, and students, the more likely it is that the study's findings will be similar for your group.

3. Research design: What kind of design did the researchers use? Is there anything unclear or potentially problematic about the design?
Tip: If you want to know about the impact of a program, well-designed quasi-experimental and experimental studies or meta-analyses are the best. (Look at Types of Research Methods Handout.) When looking at quasi-experimental and experimental studies, it is very important to look at the characteristics of the two groups being compared to see if they differ in any way.

4. Results: What kinds of outcomes were measured? On which measures did they find statistical significance? Are the results practically significant? If you were going to implement this, what kind of outcomes can you reasonably expect?
Tip: You want to see statistically significant results on the program outcomes. Practical significance involves looking at actual mean differences between the two groups and determining if implementing the intervention is worth your time and effort.

5. Implementation: What information is provided about implementation? Does the study connect implementation to the results in any way?
Tip: The outcomes of all interventions depend on how well they have been implemented. You will want to pay special attention to any aspects of implementation that are associated with more or less positive results.

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Intervention Review Protocol

To review an intervention, you will want to collect the following kinds of information: program descriptions, implementation information, and outcome data. Sources for this information might include: vendor websites, internal or 3rd party evaluation reports, What Works Clearinghouse(WWC) or other reviews, research reports (e.g. reports from Mathematica, AIR, RAND, MDRC, etc.), descriptive studies and journal articles (peer-reviewed, research & practitioner).

Now that you have your portfolio of information on the intervention together, below are some questions to answer and discuss as a group. The responses should help in making decisions about which interventions might be most beneficial to your students.

Desired Outcomes: What are the goals of this intervention? How well do those match with your students' needs (address problem areas, meet subgroup needs, etc.)?

Program Features: What are the core features of the intervention? How consistent are they with your team's/school's/district's vision? Do these features seem like they would lead to the desired outcomes?

Implementation Issues: As you reviewed the portfolio, did any implementation challenges become apparent? Could any issues like leadership capacity, staffing, funding and facilities pose a challenge to implementation?

Extent of the evidence: Are there any studies that used a strong design to determine the intervention's impact? Did they find statistically significant effects? On what?

Initial Impression: Recommended Need more info. Not recommended

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Summary Checklist of Information Available on Interventions

This checklist is designed to help you develop a **portfolio** with enough information to make an informed decision. If you have a specific kind of information, you will indicate that on the table by a check or by the name of the document. In cases where information is not available, you will note that in the table. Under the outcome information section, you will indicate the type of studies you have. This will help you determine the extent of the evidence on a particular intervention.

Name of Intervention	**Program Description** (sources: vendor, evaluations)	**Implementation information** (sources: vendor website, other districts, practitioner journals, evaluations)	**Type of Outcome Information Available** (sources: evaluations, What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) or other review websites, research journals)				
			Descriptive	Correlation / Regression	Quasi-experimental	Experimental	Meta-analysis

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Types of Research Methods

Evidence of effectiveness	Research Method	This is …	This works best for these kinds of questions…	This doesn't work well for these kinds of questions…	Additional Things to Note
LOW ↓	**Descriptive-Qualitative (Ethnography/ Case Study)**	Detailed descriptions of specific situation(s) using interviews, observations, document review You describe things as they are	How do people implement this program? What challenges do people face? What are people's perceptions?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes?	
	Descriptive-Quantitative	Numerical descriptions (frequency, average) You measure things as they are.	How many people are participating in this program? What are the characteristics of people in this program? How well did participants in this program do?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes? Why did the program work this way?	
	Correlational/ Regression Analyses	Quantitative analyses of the strength of relationships between two or more variables (e.g., are teacher qualifications correlated with student achievement?)	What is the relationship between various school or classroom context factors and student achievement? Is the extent of implementation of a program across sites correlated with better outcomes?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes?	Look for words such as, "more likely than," "less likely than," "associated with," "related to," and "correlated with."
	Quasi-experimental	Comparing a group that gets a particular intervention with another group that is similar in characteristics but did not receive the intervention—**no random assignment used**	Did the program cause any significant differences in participants' outcomes as compared to non-participants with similar characteristics who did not receive the intervention?	How are people implementing the program? Why did the program get the results it did?	Look for the phrase "compared with." Look for results that are both statistically significant and meaningful. NOTE: Did the study test the equivalence of treatment and control groups prior to the intervention?

Evidence of effectiveness	Research Method	This is …	This works best for these kinds of questions…	This doesn't work well for these kinds of questions…	Additional Things to Note
HIGH	**Experimental**	**Using random assignment** to assign participants to an experimental or treatment group and a control or comparison group (e.g., one receives the intervention and one does not)	Did the program cause any significant differences in participants' outcomes as compared to the control group's outcomes?	How are people implementing the program?	Look for words such as, "causes" or "leads to." Look for results that are both statistically significant and meaningful. NOTE: The intervention should be clearly defined so that you know what it was designed to entail, and to what extent it was implemented in the study. Also look for information on the experience of the control group.
	Meta-analysis	Synthesis of results from multiple studies to determine the average impact of a similar intervention across the studies	Over all studies conducted on a particular intervention or strategy, what can be said about the direction or strengths of the impacts? What does the totality of research studies say about the effectiveness of a program?	How are people implementing the program? What are people's perceptions?	Look for selection criteria used to include studies and look for measures of effect size. Look for differences in results among the studies. Do some studies show positive results while others show negative or do all studies show positive results?

Adapted from Edvantia SBR Rating for Technical Assistance Programs and Services form (2007) and Carter McNamara Overview of Methods to Collect Information handout (1998)

Section 8.2 English Language Learners

Although the nature of the RTI Pyramid indicates all students begin at Tier 1 and move upward through the tiers only if the interventions at the previous tiers are not sufficient to allow them to achieve, Title III under NCLB does not permit delayed eligibility testing for language minority students. Neither should language assistance be delayed in order to allow students to progress "normally" through the tiers. (See section on Eligibility)

Eligibility for ESOL services automatically should be considered a Tier 4 Intervention.

- For the purposes of serving the student effectively and efficiently, the language minority student enters the Pyramid at the Tier 4 and as the student progresses with language development and academic proficiency, the level of interventions needed to support the student will decrease accordingly.
- However, it also important to remember that many ESOL students spend most of their school day in the general classroom with accomodations provided according to the ELL/TPC. During this time in the general classroom, ESOL students should receive the same Tier1 interventions as other students in the class.
- The accommodations provided in the Presentation or Response categories of the ELL/TPC are considered Tier 2 interventions appropriate to the student's English language proficiency needs and improvement in language development and academic achievement should be noted as data for progress monitoring results.

For the purposes of ESOL services as support for second language acquisition and development, the RTI Pyramid functions as a regressive model, rather than as a model of progressive interventions.

- As students near grade level proficiency, it is probable that Tier 1 interventions, appropriate for all students, will be the only additional support needed.
- These students face unique obstacles, due to their lack of English proficiency, and it is essential that they receive immediate services and assistance in order to provide them with the educational support they require.

Educators are attuned to the fact that ELLs need immediate social and content language development and support and understand the need to provide ELLs with more targeted interventions than those to be provided to all students. **Although Tier 2 is a good entry level for many at-risk groups, the specially designed learning focus of Tier 4, with its emphasis on specialized programs and specialized instructional delivery and methodology, describes the basic tenets of ESOL instruction.**

Although ELLs are considered to be at the Tier 4 level when eligible for ESOL services, this does not preclude those ELLs who are found to need additional support from receiving it through the SST process or, when they meet eligibility criteria, through Special Education. These programs would support and supplement the specialized language acquisition interventions of the ESOL program, as well as address any other learning problems that may have been identified.

Additional Information regarding the Title III ESOL program can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website: http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_esol.aspx

Q & A Regarding ESOL Instruction:

1. **Can we adjust our amount of time for our ESOL segments so that they fit our RTI model?** The ESOL Program is a state funded mandate that carries a FTE weight. For funding purposes, the segments must meet the minimum allotted time designated in the chart.

2. **What is the advantage of "sheltered" instruction?** Sheltered instruction is a content area course with a class composed only of ELLs and taught by a teacher who holds certification in the appropriate content area, along with the ESOL endorsement or ESOL certification, and who has a background in second language acquisition. This training allows the students to benefit from instruction that will be targeted specifically to their needs as English language learners and that will ensure that the GPS for the content course are being met.

Purpose of the ESOL Program:

The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program is designed to serve students in grades K-12 whose first language is one other than English and who have been determined to lack English language proficiency in social and academic instructional language. The program is designed to provide students with targeted language support during the lengthy process of second language acquisition.

English language learners face unique challenges in the classroom as they strive to learn academic content at the same time they are developing their initial English language skills. Many of these students have a history of interrupted or limited formal schooling; therefore, they may not have had the opportunity to develop literacy skills and content knowledge in their primary or home language.

ELLs need strong support in the content areas which can be offered by means of targeted interventions, accommodations, elective courses, or differentiated instruction in required courses by a classroom teacher who holds the ESOL Endorsement and has been trained to understand English proficiency levels, utilizing the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards to differentiate instruction for ELLs. Teachers whose classes contain ELLs, but who do not hold the ESOL Endorsement, should receive specific training regarding instructional strategies that support the second language learner.

Instructional Staff:

All ESOL teachers must be certified teachers, but the certification requirements may vary depending on the courses taught. If a teacher is assigned to teach ESOL language acquisition courses, those beginning with a course number with the 55 prefix, the teacher must hold appropriate grade level certification in any content field and the ESOL Endorsement **or** full ESOL certification. The ESOL I-IV courses are ELA courses and as such must be taught by a teacher with English Language Arts certification as well as either the ESOL Endorsement or ESOL certification. If a teacher is assigned to teach a sheltered content course for English language learners, the teacher must hold the appropriate content area certification as well as either the ESOL Endorsement or ESOL certification. A sheltered class is defined as any content course which is composed solely of ELLs, taught, following the GPS of the content course, by a teacher with ESOL credentials, and is assigned the state approved content course number.

Eligibility:

Students whose answers on the Home Language Survey indicate a primary, first or home language other than English must be assessed for eligibility for ESOL services. This screening must be complete within the first 30 days of the school year. If a student enters school after the 30 day period, the assessment must be done within the first two weeks of enrollment. It is the expectation of GaDOE Title III ESOL that students will be assessed as soon as logistically possible within the appropriate time frames.

Upon enrollment in a school, all students entering grades K-12 should be administered the Home Language Survey to determine if a student has a primary language other than English. The Home Language Survey consists of three questions:

What was the language(s) the student first learned to speak?
What language(s) does the student speak at home?

What language(s) does the student speak most often?

Any student who answers one or more of the 3 questions with a language other than English must be screened using the WIDA-Access Proficiency Test (W-APT) to determine eligibility for language assistance services. The W-APT screener, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the WIDA Consortium, of which Georgia is a member, is a research-based instrument utilized by the 18 states that are members of the WIDA Consortium.

Students who score less than a proficiency level of 5.0 on the W-APT are considered to be English language learners (ELLs) and are eligible for ESOL services. A proficiency level of less than 5.0 indicates interventions the student will need language and academic support during the language development process.

Support may be individualized or may be offered through classes or resources available to all students, such as before- or after-school tutoring, preview sessions, or support courses. The ESOL teacher, in collaboration with the content teachers, guidance counselor and appropriate administrators, can and should assist in determining and designing appropriate interventions and supports for ELLs. Working in collaboration, these professionals serve the educational interests of the ELLs in the capacity of the Language Assessment Committee (LAC) team to ensure that ELLs are properly supported during the language proficiency development period.

ESOL Instructional Delivery Models:

There are six state approved instructional models through which ESOL students are served.

- Pull-out model outside the academic block- students receive small group language instruction
- Push-in model within the academic block – students remain in the classroom and receive content instruction from their content area teacher along with language assistance from the ESOL teacher
- Cluster center model to which students from two or more schools are transported for instruction in a program designed for intensive language assistance
- Resource center/laboratory model - students receive assistance in a group setting supplemented by multimedia materials
- Scheduled class period – students at the middle and high school levels receive language assistance and/or content instruction in a class composed of ELLs only;
- Another alternative model approved in advance by the Department of Education Title III ESOL unit

Class Size for ESOL:

Grade(s) / Subject(s)	**Funding Class Size**	Maximum System Average in class with **No Paraprofessional**	Maximum System Average in class **with Paraprofessional**
K-3	**7**	**11**	**13**
4-8	**7**	**14**	**15**

9-12	**7**	**18**	**20**

If the ESOL teacher "pushes in" to a grade level or content class for an inclusion setting, the overall class size is that of the general education grade limits, but the ESOL class size limits still apply for the number of ELLs permitted in the class.

Instructional Segments:

Grades	Required Minutes Daily or Weekly per Segment	Maximum Number of ESOL FTE Segments Allowable
K-3	**Daily=45; Weekly=225**	**1**
4-8	**Daily=50; Weekly=250**	**(Up to) 2**
9-12	**Daily=55; Weekly=275**	**(Up to) 5** **(*90 minute Block = 2)**

Assessment:

English Language Learners (ELLs) must be assessed for proficiency on an annual basis, using the state approved assessment, *ACCESS for ELLs*. If students reach a Composite Proficiency Level of 5.0 or higher on Tier C of the *ACCESS* they are considered proficient in English and will be exited from the program. If students score between 4.0 and 4.9 on Tier C of the *ACCESS* and meet or exceed standards on the grade level state mandated competency assessment, a Language Assessment Committee (LAC) may be convened and determine that the student should be exited from language assistance services. All students who exit the ESOL program must be monitored for two calendar years following their program exit.

Section 8.3 Gifted Learners

How does gifted education fit into the Response to Intervention (RTI)?

Advanced learning needs can be addressed in the general education classroom by providing instructional interventions prior to identifying students for specialized educational services. By documenting instructional interventions, the RTI process allows high-achieving students access to differentiated curriculum, flexible pacing, cluster grouping, and other universal interventions available to all students in the regular classroom.

When should students be considered for gifted education services?

If there is compelling evidence that instructional modifications have not met a student's need, local school districts should establish a decision-making process that allows professional staff members to consider all information available during the student search/nomination stage of the process and determine whether it is appropriate to proceed with a formal referral and further assessment. Factors to be considered in this screening process should include the strength of the evidence of the student's advanced learning needs, the recency and performance levels of any previous gifted program referral, circumstances which would indicate those assessment results are no longer valid, or other criteria adopted by the local system.

The term differentiation is used quite often in education. What is differentiation, and when should differentiation be used in the classroom?

Differentiation can be defined as a way of teaching in which teachers *proactively* modify curriculum, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the needs of individual students and /or small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in the classroom (Carol Ann Tomlinson, 1998).

Additional information regarding Gifted Education can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website. The web address is below:

http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_gifted.aspx

Instructional Options for High-Ability and Gifted Students

The needs of high achievers and gifted students vary widely; therefore, an array of instructional modification options should be available to addresses all grade levels and content areas. Specific learner objectives are developed on a case-by-case basis. Tier 2 and Tier 3 options to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

Alternative Assessments

Students are offered opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of material learned in "real-world" ways.

Compacting

Students are allowed to demonstrate proficiency in curriculum outcomes, units, or courses and progress to more appropriate/challenging instruction.

Cross-Age Grouping/Multi-Age Grouping

Students of different ages/grades are grouped together for instruction for all or part of a day.

Enrichment Clusters

Students are grouped according to achievement levels for instructional purposes. Focus on student choice and students as producers of useful products.

Graduated Rubrics

The standard and level of student proficiency and accomplishments designed for students and teachers to measure learning outcomes. Graduated rubrics offer clear expectations for quality and levels of excellence to encourage optimum performance among high-ability learners.

Independent/Directed Study

Students participate in a self-initiated, teacher directed and approved course of study in an area of interest as described in a written contract, to include objective(s), research and planned presentation(s). Independent study encourages student autonomy in planning and problem-solving.

Interest Centers

Centers within the classroom that link curriculum topics to areas of student talent and interest in depth and breath.

Subject Grouping Within Class

Students are grouped according to achievement, within a classroom, for instruction in one or more subjects (i.e., students stay in assigned classroom).

Subject Grouping Across Teams/Classes

Students are grouped according to achievement, within a grade level, for instruction in one or more subjects (i.e., students go to a different classroom or team, within the same grade).

Subject Advancement Across Grades

Individual students go to a different classroom, in a higher grade, for instruction in one or more subject areas.

Tiered Assignments

Assignments designed for varying ability levels of students. More complex assignments better meet the needs of high-ability learners.

Tiered Products

Products specially designed to demonstrate understanding of a topic in a more in-depth manner.

Instructional Modification Options for High-Ability and Gifted Students

In a differentiated classroom, teachers differentiate *content**,** process**,*** and *product* according to a student's *readiness**,** interest,* and *learning profile**.***

- ***Content****- what the teacher wants the student to learn and the materials or resources through which that is accomplished*
- ***Process****- activities designed to ensure that students use key skills to make sense out of essential ideas and information*
- ***Products****- vehicles through which students demonstrate and extend what they have learned*
- ***Readiness****- a student's entry point relative to a particular understanding or skill*
- ***Learning Profile****- how an individual student learns*

A range of Tier 1, 2 and 3 instructional and management opportunities with varying degrees of preparation might include:

Tier 1: Low Preparation Differentiation	***Tier 2: High Preparation Differentiation***
Flexible-Learning Groups by Readiness, Interest, Learning Profiles	*Students are Assessed in Multiple Ways*
Choice of Books	*Tiered Activities*
Homework Options	*Tiered Products*
Use of Reading Buddies	*Independent Study*
Various Journal Prompts	*Multiple Testing Options*
Student/Teacher Goal Setting	*Multiple Texts*
Varied Pacing with Anchor Options	*Alternative Assessments*
Work Alone or Together	*Subject Advancement within class/group, across teams, across grade levels*
Flexible Seating	*Course Compacting*
Varied Scaffolding	*Tiered Centers*
Varied Computer Programs	*Spelling by Readiness*
Design-A-DAY	*Varying Organizers*
Varied Supplemental Materials	*Community Mentorships*
Computer Mentors	*Stations*
Think-Pair-Share by Readiness, Interest, Learning Profiles	*Group Investigations*
Open-ended Activities	*Choice Boards*
Explorations by Interest	*Think-Tac-Toe*
Options for Competition	*Simulations*

Purpose of the Gifted Education Program:

Gifted Education services are designed to serve students in grades K-12 who meet the eligibility criteria as defined in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS.

Instructional Staff:

All Gifted Education teachers must be certified staff and hold either the Gifted In-field Endorsement or the Gifted P-12 Certificate.

Eligibility:

Students in grades K-12 are eligible for Gifted Education Services if the requirements in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS are met. The rule provides two options to establish a student's eligibility for gifted program placement: (See http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-4-2-.38.pdf)

- Option 1- psychometric option uses a composite mental ability test score and achievement data; or

- Option 2- three out of four multiple-criteria eligibility option. Local school systems should give children opportunities to qualify in both ways.

Gifted Education Services Instructional Delivery Models:

There are six SBOE-approved instructional models to serve gifted students. (See http://www.gadoe.org/_documents/curriculum/instruction/gifted_regulations.pdf)

Direct

- Resource Class (K-12) ~ Limited class size (grades K-5: 17; grades 6-12: 21)
- Advanced Content Class (6-12) ~ Reduced class size (21)
- Cluster Grouping (K-12) ~ Recommended class size (5-8 gifted students)

Indirect

- Collaborative Teaching (K-12)
- Mentorship/Internship (9-12)
- Joint Enrollment/Postsecondary Options

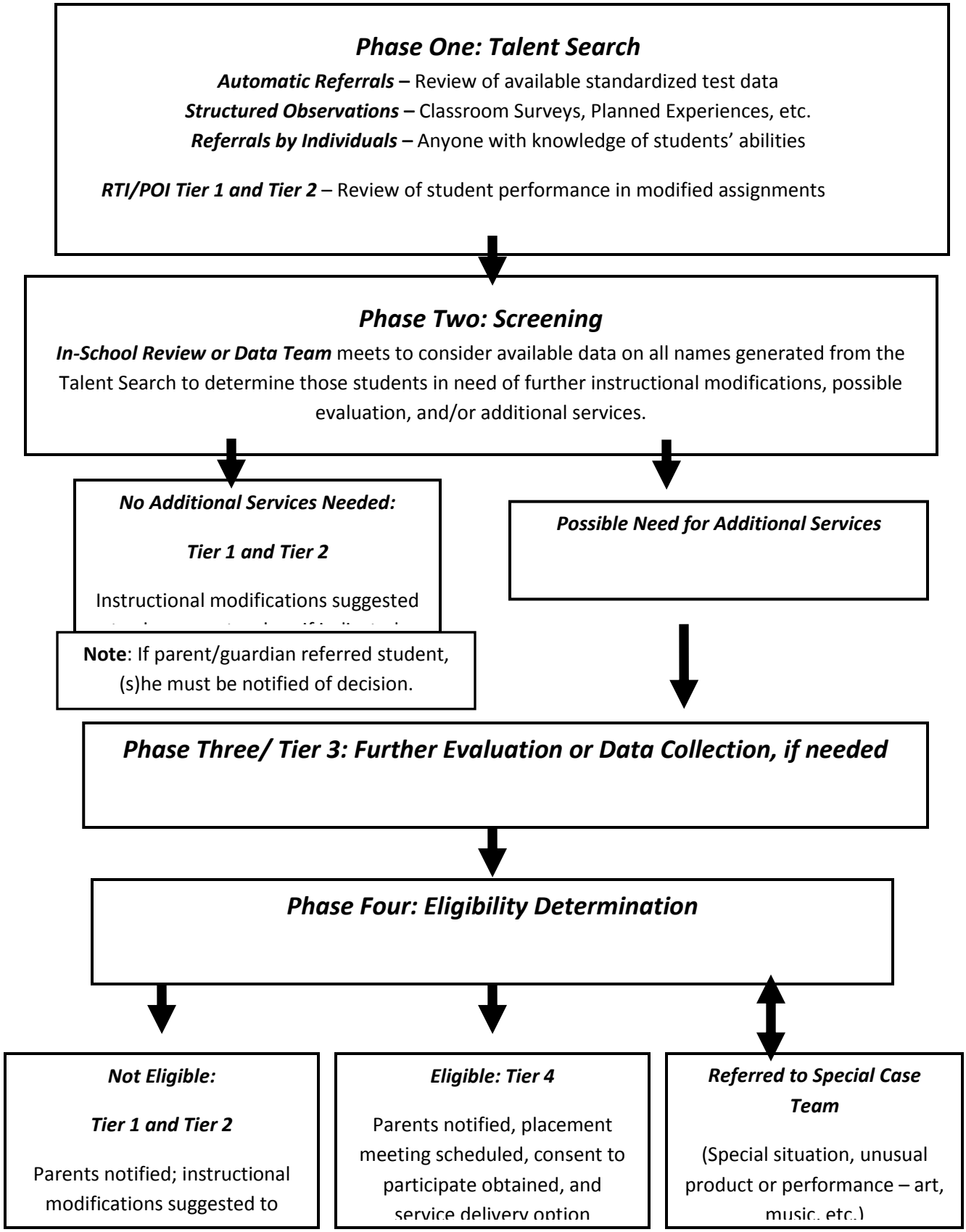
Other

- Innovative Model approved yearly by the GA DOE Gifted Education department

Class size: A Gifted Education class must follow specific class size regulations.

(See Appendix C of SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08 CLASS SIZE – (See http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-5-1-.08.pdf

SAMPLE STUDENT TALENT SEARCH FLOWCHART



Section 8.4 Title I

Title I, Part A Program and Response to Intervention: The Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions

How may Title I staff and funding be used to support Response to Intervention (RTI)?

The Title I program can be a part of RTI process regardless of whether the school operates a targeted assistance or schoolwide program. Schoolwide programs that consolidate federal funds have more flexibility in terms of how funding and staff can be used in the RTI process.

- In schoolwide programs consolidating federal funds, all of the school's resources, educational services, and personnel work together toward identified goals for raising student achievement. A Title I schoolwide school could adopt the RTI process as its research-based whole school reform strategy. In this scenario, any activity at the school that supports the implementation of the RTI process would be an allowable expenditure of Title I funds provided that the RTI process and its implementation are explained in the school's schoolwide plan.

- In a targeted assistance program, staff paid with Title I funds are encouraged to collaborate with other staff whenever possible. However, when a school operates a targeted assistance program, Title I funded staff provide services ONLY to students identified through the Title I student selection process. Schools must also ensure that Title I students receive supplemental instruction from a teacher who meets the highly qualified requirement. The supplemental instruction provided to Title I students must be above and beyond the standards-based classroom provided in Tier I of Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid.

- Title I teachers can continue to be active in the RTI process as students move through Tiers II, III, and IV of Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid. Although most Title I teachers work with small groups, they can work with individual students who have been identified as in need of intensive intervention. It is critical, however, to make certain that all students that work with the Title I teacher, regardless of their academic progress, have been identified as Title I students through the required student selection process.

- When considering use of Title I, Part A funds to support RTI in a Title I targeted assistance program, schools and districts must examine each of RTI's component parts: needs assessment, professional development, universal screening, goal setting and intervention identification, implementation of intervention, continuous progress monitoring, and evaluation. Under certain conditions, Title I, Part A funds may be used to support RTI.

Needs Assessment
Funding for the activities for needs assessment must come from a source other than Title I, Part A.

Professional Development
Funding for professional development that is not exclusively focused on helping at-risk students or is extremely expensive must come from a source other than Title I, Part A or have the cost shared between programs where appropriate.

Universal Screening
School districts must cover the costs of purchasing and administering student selection tools to identify students for Title I services.

Continued Progress Monitoring
Title I personnel should be included in any training on the tools used for progress monitoring as well as the universal screening assessment. If other federal programs (Reading First, Special Education, etc.) are sharing the cost of purchasing progress monitoring tools, then Title I funds could be used to pay a prorated share based on the number of students in the Title I program local or state funds are being used, Title I could not pay a portion since this would create a supplanting issue. Any expenditure that the district covers for non-Title I students must be covered by the district for Title I students.

Additional Information:

Additional information regarding this program can be found on the Georgia Department of Education Web site. The web address is below:

http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/tss_title_lea.aspx?PageReq=TSSTitleIA

Purpose of Title I Program:

Title I, Part A was established to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards.

Instructional Staff:

All teachers providing instruction in a program supported by Title I, Part A funding must complete all certification and highly qualified requirements as defined by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC).

Eligibility for Title I, Part A Services:

Schools serving students in grades K-12 are eligible for Title I, Part A funding if the percentage of children from low-income families is at least as high as the percentage of children from low-income families served by the local educational agency as a whole. There are two types of Title I, Part A programs: Targeted Assistance programs and Schoolwide programs.

- Schoolwide programs:
    - Not less than 40% of the children in the eligible school attendance area are from low-income families or not less than 40% of the children enrolled in the school are from low-income families.
    - All children in a schoolwide program are considered to be Title I students.
    - May consolidate and use Title I, Part A funds with other federal, State and local funds in order to upgrade the entire educational program of the schools.
- Targeted Assistance Programs:
    - The eligible population for services is children not older than 21 who are entitled to a free public education through grade 12 and children who are not yet at a grade level at which the local educational agency provides a free public education.
    - Eligible children from the eligible population are children identified by the school as failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the State's challenging student academic

achievement standards on the basis of multiple, educationally related, objective criteria established by the school. Children from preschool through grade 2 are selected solely on the basis of such criteria as teacher judgment, interviews with parents, and developmentally appropriate measures. Eligible children include:

- Economically disadvantaged children, children with disabilities, migrant children or limited English proficient children.
- Children who, at any time in the 2 years preceding the year for which the determination is made, participated in a Head Start, Even Start, or Early reading First program, or in a Title I, Part A preschool.
- Children who, at any time in the 2 years preceding the year for which the determination is made, received services under Title I, Part C.
- Children in a local institution for neglected or delinquent children and youth or attending a community day program for such children.
- Children who are homeless and attending any school served by the local educational agency.

The Student Selection Process:

Before a district integrates Title I services into its RTI model, there must be a clear definition of the RTI model. The definition should include a detailed description of the core educational program (Tier 1). It should specify the services that will be provided and the criteria to be used for determining placement in intervention, as well as, the projected duration of the intervention.

The intent of both the student selection process required by Title I and the universal screening component in RTI is to identify at-risk students who should be targeted for additional instruction. Since the RTI process does not suggest that only the universal screening data be used to identify appropriate interventions, the additional data used in the RTI process for initial progress monitoring can and should be used in the Title I student selection process to further identify students most in need of Title I services.

Instructional Delivery:

- Reduced class size
- Small group instruction
- Before and After school programs
- Co-teaching/inclusion
- Summer Remediation

Class size:
Class size for Title I, Part A must follow Appendix A of the class size rule. Additional information regarding class size can be reviewed by executing this link:

http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-5-1-.08.pdf

Section 8.5 Early Intervention Program (EIP) and Remedial Education Program (REP)

Children start school at a designated chronological age, but differ greatly in their individual development and experience base. **The Early Intervention Program** (EIP) is designed to serve students who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level. The purpose of the Early Intervention Program is to provide additional instructional resources to help students who are performing below grade level obtain the necessary academic skills to reach grade level performance in the shortest possible time.

The Remedial Education Program (REP) is an instructional program designed for students in grades 6-12 who have identified deficiencies in reading, writing, and math. This program provides individualized basic skills instruction as mandated by Georgia Law in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

For specific information about the scheduling, staffing, and data reporting of EIP and REP, please go to this link:

http://www.gadoe.org/ci_services.aspx

The instruction that is occurring in the EIP and REP classrooms needs to be at the center of the schools attention. The use of these valuable resources to support students within the Georgia Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions should be a part of the school wide instructional plan.

If a student is receiving EIP or REP services, would this be considered a Tier 2 intervention?

For EIP or REP services to be considered a Tier 2 intervention, the instruction that is occurring during this intervention would be in addition to Tier 1 and be evidence-based.

> **Example:** During the universal screening process, a first grader is identified to meet EIP eligibility criteria in reading. This student begins to receive EIP reading support during the day at a time which does not interfere with general classroom reading instruction. The instruction in the EIP support class is designed to systematically address weaknesses, monitor the response to the intervention through progress monitoring, and support transfer of learning to the general classroom. (Tier 2)
>
> **Non-example**: During the universal screening process, a first grader is identified to meet EIP eligibility criteria in reading. This student begins to receive EIP reading support during the general classroom reading instruction block by moving to a small group setting within the classroom or another classroom. This reading support becomes the students' sole source of reading instruction. (Tier 1)

Section 8.6 Young Children and RTI

This section is dedicated to providing guidance to school districts on "How to apply RTI practices" to young children, not yet school-aged (aged 3-5), who are being referred to the district for Child Find Services.

Why should school districts be concerned with children that are not school-aged?

Under The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), as well as our GaDOE regulations, school districts are required to find children that are disabled, to evaluate them, and to determine eligibility of special education services by the child's 3rd birthday.

GaDOE regulations typically address children in grades PK-12. Are there regulations that support applying "RTI practices" for preschool-aged children?

Yes, there are two specific state regulations that apply to *all* children suspected of having a disability (ages 3-21yrs.). Those two regulations are:

- The child find rule **(160-4-7-.03)** requires that student referrals be preceded by evidence-based academic or behavioral *interventions*.
- The eligibility rule **(160-4-7-.05)** requires that students not be determined to be a child with a disability if the primary factor is lack of *appropriate instruction*...

When should a school district determine if a child has received "appropriate instruction"?

Determining whether the student received appropriate instruction" should be addressed before or during the evaluation process. If it is determined that the child ***has not*** received "appropriate instruction," the instruction must be provided **before** eligibility determination.

Will determining "appropriate instruction" delay the evaluation process or deny parental request for an evaluation?

No, it should never delay the evaluation process (60 day timeline) nor shall it deny a parental request for an evaluation.

What are typical examples of documentation of "appropriate instruction" that should be considered for young children?

- Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) from Babies Can't Wait (BCW)
- Speech, OT, PT reports from private providers
- Medical Consultations from the child's physician
- Regular early childhood provider report on child's academic, behavioral, and developmental progress as it relates to the GA Early Learning Standards (GELS)
- Pre K and Head Start reports on child's academic, behavioral, and developmental progress as it relates to the GA Pre-K Standards or the Head Start Outcomes.
- Work samples, behavior charts/logs,
- Lesson plans, observation reports
- Parent report

Many of the typical examples of "appropriate instruction" appear to be geared toward children in regular early childhood environments like Georgia Pre-K, Head Start, Private Preschool, or

Daycare. If the child has been at home and is being referred by the parent/guardian, how is "appropriate instruction" documented?

- School districts should consider obtaining information about "appropriate instruction" and "previous interventions," by ***interviewing*** the referring parent/guardian on "what they have done or tried, etc".
- If the parent ***has not*** provided any instructions or interventions, then the System should provide "appropriate" instructions and/or interventions during the (60 day) evaluation process thru providing the parent with instructions, materials, and examples **or** providing the interventions themselves. Note: parent/guardian typically will assist the school district in providing the prescribed interventions and/or instructions, but ***they are not required***. **The Parent/Guardian always reserves the right <u>not to participate</u>.**

Are regular early childhood environments like Georgia Pre-K, Head Start, Private Preschool, or Daycare *required* to conduct RTI before referring a child to the school district for Child Find?

No, they are not required; however, both Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning/Bright From the Start (DECAL) and Georgia Head Start Association support GaDOE's RTI initiative. Additionally, both have provided guidance to their constituents on best practices for providing Response to Intervention. Georgia Pre-K and Head Start classes housed within school districts should refer to their respective agencies to obtain this guidance.

Is there a GaDOE pyramid model of RTI specifically for young children?

No. School districts should follow the current model that was developed for grades K-12 as guidance for providing tiered intervention strategies. Districts should always remember that use of the pyramid model will vary according to the child's needs.

Section 8.7 Funding for Interventions

The Department recognizes that funding is a critical factor impacting decision making in all areas of the district. **The Department recommends districts evaluate the distribution of existing funds for supporting interventions in schools**.

- Realizing that RTI is not another "initiative" but rather an organizational framework and alignment of resources for student support, school districts will be able to create a plan to build the capacity for future support for students and their needs.
    - Projecting and planning for future intervention needs based on current student performance data will support systems working to maximize funding source availability.
    - A consistent system wide focus on providing interventions for students based on progress monitoring data will allow the decision making process for funding allocations to be fluid and flexible.
    - RTI is embedded in the structure and elements of the Georgia School Keys.
    - RTI is not a "supplanting" of services for students. RTI provides supplemental support in addition to the general classroom instruction.
- Integration of funding sources, where appropriate and permissible, is a "best practice." Schools have access to a variety of fund sources that can be used to create supports for students, including:
    - State and Federal Funds
        - Early Intervention Program (EIP)
            - Link to guidance: http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEip
        - Remedial Education Program (REP)
            - Link to guidance: http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServRemedial
        - Professional Learning
        - Federal Programs (Title I, Title IIA, etc)
            - Link to guidance: http://www.gadoe.org/tss_title.aspx
        - Special Education
        - Technology
        - State School Improvement Grant
        - Middle School Funding Grant
        - Perkins Money (CCAE Coordinated Career Academic Education, Project Success, and CTI – Career Technical Instruction)
    - Local Funds
        - Local school and/or district funds
        - grant initiatives
        - allottments
    - School Generated Funds
        - Fundraisers
        - Athletics and Fine Arts
- For the sources listed above, districts should keep a balanced view of program rules, program eligibility criteria, program structures, and program outcomes. By using a problem solving approach, linking student needs, and maximizing program funding, appropriate local and/or district choices can be made.
- It is important to remember that FTE funding codes must be accurate in the local student data management system and uploaded correctly in to Student Record to ensure future capacity building for interventions. School and district administrators should have a strong understanding of the FTE Data Collection General Information Guidelines.

- Districts identified as having significant disproportionality for the identification, placement or discipline of children with disabilities must use the required 15% of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to support implementation of RTI in the district. Please contact staff from the Division for Special Education at the Department of Education for additional information.

Funding Scenarios - Examples where decision making impacts funding sources

Elementary EIP

Georgia Elementary School has traditionally used a pullout model to provide early interventions to identified students. This method has provided EIP funds on a yearly basis. However, some students have not been served since the limited amount of students allowed in a pull-out model required the school to prioritize services for EIP. If the school considered an augmented model, a higher funding return may be earned. Several augmented segments would earn more money than one pullout.

Middle School REP

Georgia Middle School provides an academic connection class to students identified as needing reading interventions. Unfortunately, the students in this course have not been coded correctly. The school coded this class as 35.01800 (Study Skills 7) when it should have been coded 23.01260 (Language Arts 7/Connections Remediation). This correct coding would have increased REP funding for future interventions.

High School REP

Georgia High School is using a reduced class size model to provide interventions for students in math. The students were coded correctly (a "1" is the first numerical digit to the right of the decimal) but the required class size was not followed. Since the class size was exceeded, REP funding was not applied to this course.

Chapter 9 – Fidelity of Implementation

As stated in chapter 3, fidelity (or integrity) of implementation is the delivery of instruction in the way in which it was designed to be delivered (Gresham, MacMillan, Boebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Fidelity must also address the integrity with which screening and progress-monitoring procedures are completed and an explicit decision-making model is followed. In an RTI model, fidelity is important at both the school level (e.g., implementation of the process) and the teacher level (e.g., implementation of instruction and progress monitoring, NRCLD 2006). If fidelity of implementation is not monitored and required, one cannot be sure that students have actually received the interventions as designed, and therefore students' response to the interventions cannot be determined, and the effectiveness of the interventions cannot be measured with validity or reliability.

How can schools ensure fidelity of implementation? (NRCLD 2006)

- Link interventions to improved outcomes (credibility)
- Definitively describe operations, techniques, and components
- Clearly define responsibilities of specific persons
- Create a data system for measuring operations, techniques, and components
- Create a system for feedback and decision making (formative)
- Create accountability measures for non-compliance

The conversation centering around fidelity of instruction is not just an intervention conversation but a conversation for all Tiers. In Georgia, the non negotiables for Tier 1 instruction require a standards-based instructional framework. With that in mind, schools have a responsibility to ensure each teacher in the building is versed in the language of standards-based teaching. The Georgia Keys to Quality is the starting point for this conversation. The descriptors outlined in the Keys to Quality detail actions teachers and administrators should be taking to provide a rich learning environment. As data teams review student achievement results, an awareness of the level of implementation of standards-based instruction in the building is key. (See Standards Based Classroom Rubric in the Keys to Quality and Appendix) With this school-wide standards based classroom implementation data, the team can begin to determine how Tier 1 instruction is impacting student performance.

The implementation of any intervention (whether a Tier 2 school created or a Tier 3 purchased program) needs to occur according to the creators specifications. As noted above, to ensure that implementation of the intervention is carried out with fidelity to the design requires monitoring by administrators and data team members to ensure that the level of student response or non-response to the intervention is or is not connected to the delivery.

Implementation fidelity can be impacted by a wide range of factors that schools should be cognizant of (Allen & Blackston, 2003; Yeaton & Sechrest, 1981):

- Intervention complexity
- Time and material resources required for the intervention
- The number of intervention agents
- Efficacy (actual and as perceived by the intervention agents and stakeholders)
- The motivation of the intervention agents and stakeholders (Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000; Gresham, Gansle, Noell, Cohen, & Rosenblum, 1993).

The Department recommends districts create a system to monitor the fidelity of implementation of instruction (including interventions) at all Tiers of the Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions.

Fidelity has a great impact on student achievement. Research based teaching and learning practices are built on a foundation of fidelity to high standards of practice. Higher performing schools embed assessment of the fidelity of interventions. Often the more intensive the intervention/instructional practices, the more need for rigorous fidelity checks. It is important for schools to embed teaching the importance of fidelity: what it is and how it can be assessed.

If steps are not put in place to assess fidelity, it is difficult to make conclusions about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an intervention (Upah, 2008; Roach & Elliott, 2008).

There are several approaches that can be used to assess fidelity (Roach & Elliott, 2008):

- Self report
    - The person who is delivering (teaching) the intervention keeps a log or completes a checklist which records the critical components of the intervention.
- Permanent Products
    - Data and artifacts/documentation of the implementation of the intervention are analyzed to determine if critical components were followed.
- Observations
    - Observations are conducted of the delivery of the intervention, checking for the presence or absence and accuracy of implementation and critical intervention components.

Essential Questions

- **What is fidelity** (Parisi et. al., 2007)?
    - Whether an intervention was implemented as planned
    - Surface fidelity
        - Were key components implemented?
        - Was adequate time allowed?
        - Was the specified amount of material covered?
    - Quality of delivery
        - Teacher behaviors
            - How is the teacher differentiating?
            - Can you identify the standards based teaching practices?
            - Is the teacher using formative assessment to guide instruction?
            - Is there a range of teaching methods?
        - Student behaviors
            - Are the student's engaged in learning?
            - What are the students doing?
            - Are the students working together?
            - Is there evidence of active or passive learning?
- **Why measure fidelity?**
    - Ensure the intervention was implemented
    - Detect and correct errors early
    - Distinguish between an ineffective intervention and an effective intervention implemented with poor fidelity
- **How is your school measuring fidelity**?
- **Creating a form**
    - What is the scope of your form?
    - Use curriculum and intervention materials
    - Consider time allotted for instruction overall and for components of the intervention
    - Consider material to be covered
    - Consider quality of implementation

Chapter 10 – Roles and Responsibilities

For districts working to fully implement Response to Intervention, it is important to recognize the roles of various stakeholders. Below are recommendations from the Department designed to support district development:

State Level Leadership

- Provide up to date guidance to support system implementation
- Support a statewide common understanding of the elements of RTI
- Identify exemplary school based models and best practices

System Level Leadership

- Create a district wide plan for RTI implementation including the plan for monitoring implementation of the interventions and addressing issues of fidelity
- Determine reading, mathematics, and behavior expectations
- Establish and support a common set of characteristics of Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction in all classrooms
- Support the implementation of the non negotiable at each Tier of the RTI pyramid

Building Level Leadership

- Implement the plan for RTI implementation including the plan for monitoring implementation of the interventions and addressing issues of fidelity
- Create a school wide focus on assessment driving instruction
- Develop staff understanding of the RTI process
- Establish schedules to provide various times for interventions
- Ensure Tier 1 standards based instruction occurs in all classrooms
- Establish standard protocols of support for students needing Tier 2 support

Classroom Teachers

- Implement the GPS
- Implement the Tier interventions (as planned, as appropriate)
- Consistent use Formative and Summative assessments to guide classroom instruction
- Differentiated Instruction is the heart of teaching and learning
- Consistent communication with the intervention and instructional specialists

Intervention and Instructional Specialists (SST chair, REP/EIP, Special Education, etc.)

- Implement the GPS
- Implement the Tier interventions (as planned, as appropriate)
- Consistent communication with general classroom teachers
- Coaching and modeling of differentiated instruction, progress monitoring, and research based interventions
- Adherence to fidelity of implementation of the intervention

School Psychologists

- Participate in informal and formal consultations with teaching teams (rather than an evaluative role) at all Tiers with a focus on standards-based instruction
- Providing training, direction, and support for progress monitoring and intervention selection
- Support foundational understanding of school wide RTI

Parents and Families

- Participate in the parent and school partnership process
- Be familiar with the Georgia Performance Standards for a given grade and/or content area
- Expect consistent school communication regarding student achievement
- Communicate with school administrators concerning questions about school programs and student support

Chapter 11 – Parent Information

Section 10.1 – Parents and Families

- As with all aspects of education, parents play a critical role in the Response to Intervention process. Strong parent communication procedures in all areas of the school will support open lines of information regarding all teaching and learning initiatives.
- For support and understanding, the Department recommends schools provide parents information about RTI through the general education classroom. This procedure will highlight the importance of all students receiving a quality, standards-based delivery of instruction with timely, multiple opportunities for support, as needed. While some students will need more intensive instruction, it is important for parents to understand the fluidity of movement between the Tiers and the overall goal being the student's success of applying skills learned during the intervention to general classroom performance.
- In addition, parents need to know that RTI and the Georgia Students Achievement Pyramid of Interventions is not a specific "time" or "period" during the school day. Rather, it is deeply embedded in what is happening in all areas of teaching and learning.
- RTI is not to be thought about as a delay in services for any student. It is an increase in the amount and quality of support provided for all students, as needed.
- Parents need to know that assessments drive decision making. A clear progress monitoring plan provided by the school will support understanding of the need for data based decision making.

Listed below are six Parent and Family Standards found on the website "Parent Mentor Partnership of Georgia" (www.parentmentors.org). This organization, in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education, works to provide clear communication between families and schools. The mission of this organization is to build effective family, school, and community partnerships that lead to greater achievement for students especially those with disabilities.

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at Home
- Decision Making and Advocacy
- Collaborating with the Community

Parent to Parent of Georgia
www.parenttoparentofga.org
RTI Action Network
http://www.rtinetwork.org/
National Research Center on Learning Disabilities
http://www.nrcld.org/topics/rti.html
A Parent's Guide to Response-to-Intervention (from NRCLD)
www.rtinetwork.org/images/stories/Downloads/parentsguidetorti-ncld.pdf
Response to Intervention: A Primer for Parents (from NASP National Association of School Psychologists)
www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/rtiprimer.pdf

Chapter 12 – Summary of Recommendations for RTI Implementation

Summary of Recommendations regarding the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI):

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts and schools maintain a deep focus on the development of standards-based learning environments in all classrooms.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts and schools monitor the transfer of learning from all interventions to the Tier 1 general classroom.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts create a system to monitor the fidelity of implementation of instruction (including interventions) at all Tiers of the Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends the formation of a data team at each school.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends the problem solving process checklist be used as a guide for implementation of the problem solving process.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends the use of a blended approach (problem solving process and standard protocol) to solving student learning concerns.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends the use of a universal screening process three times per year.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts and schools use an established data-management system to allow ready access to students' progress monitoring data.

The Georgia Department of Education encourages districts to use evidence-based protocols to provide a common framework for choosing evidence-based interventions.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends districts evaluate the distribution of existing funds for supporting interventions in schools.

Chapter 13 - Resources

Georgia Performance Standards
http://www.georgiastandards.org/

Georgia Virtual School
http://www.gavirtualschool.org/

Georgia SST Resource Manual
http://www.gadoe.org/tss_learning.aspx?PageReq=TSSLearningSupport

Georgia Special Education Implementation Manual
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx?PageReq=CIEXCImpMan

Georgia ESOL Resource Guide
http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_esol.aspx

US Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml

American Institutes of Research
http://www.air.org/

RTI Action Network
http://www.rtinetwork.org/

Intervention Central
http://www.interventioncentral.org/

What Works Clearing House
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

Best Evidence Encyclopedia
http://www.bestevidence.org/index.htm

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities
http://www.nrcld.org/topics/rti.html

SEDL: Advancing Research, Improving Education
http://www.sedl.org/

SERVE: Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory
http://www.serve.org/

PBIS: Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports
http://www.pbis.org/main.htm

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring
http://www.studentprogress.org/default.asp

Parent Information
http://www.parentmentors.org

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