

Best Practices in Multi-Tiered Support Structures

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In the following report, Hanover Research examines common multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) employed in elementary and secondary schools across the United States. The report begins with a description of Response to Intervention (RTI), including basic structures and the design of screenings and interventions, and continues with a brief discussion of the importance of aligning academic and behavioral support systems. The report then provides an overview of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and its variations and best practices in the planning and design of an MTSS. The report concludes with profiles of two districts that have implemented MTSS.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, multi-tiered frameworks for supporting students academically have become increasingly widespread. However, multiple studies demonstrate that poor behavior and academic performance amplify one another.¹ Such research has led to increasing support for the implementation of integrated academic and behavioral support frameworks, as each set of supports reinforces the other.² Across the country, schools and school districts have implemented multi-tiered support systems to address these issues, and have witnessed school-wide benefits in the form of reduced problem behaviors, improved academic outcomes, and enhanced capacity for creating positive teaching and learning environments.³

In this report, Hanover Research examines common multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) employed in elementary and secondary schools across the United States. The report begins with a description of Response to Intervention (RTI), including the basic structure and design of screenings and interventions, and continues with a brief discussion of the importance of aligning academic and behavioral support systems. The report then provides an overview of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and its variations, as well as best practices in the planning and design of an MTSS. This report concludes with profiles of two districts that have implemented MTSS. Accordingly, this report comprises the following two sections:

- **Section I: Multi-Tiered Support Systems** provides information related to the structure and best practices for implementation of several MTSS, including Response to Intervention, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.
- **Section II: District Profiles** provides information related to the design and structure of MTSS at two school districts: Denver Public Schools and Rapid City Area School District. These profiles highlight substantially different but successful approaches to RTI programs and their variants.

¹ Goodman, S., McIntosh, K., and Bohanon, H. "Integrating Academic and Behavior Supports Within an RtI Framework, Part 2: Universal Supports." RTI Action Network. <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/behavior-supports/integrating-academic-and-behavior-supports-universal-supports>

² McIntosh, K., Chard, D., Boland, J., and Horner, R. "Demonstration of Combined Efforts in School-Wide Academic and Behavioral Systems and Incidence of Reading and Behavior Challenges in Early Elementary Grades." *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8:3, 2006. p. 146.
<http://www.ocde.us/PBIS/Documents/Articles/Demonstration%20of%20Combined%20Efforts.pdf>

³ Nelson, J., Martella, R., and Marchand-Martella, N. "Maximizing Student Learning: The Effects of a Comprehensive School-Based Program for Preventing Problem Behaviors." *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10:3, 2002. pp.136-148.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS)** is a generalized term describing a school-based **academic or behavioral support framework** in which students requiring supplemental attention **move through successive levels of interventions**, with the intensity and individualization of instruction increasing with each subsequent level. Though initially developed for special education, there is a general consensus that MTSS models are appropriate for all students at all grade levels in elementary and secondary education.
- **In addition to a progressive tier structure, all MTSS models have a number of common elements, including the use of evidence-based instruction, an emphasis on data-driven decision-making, and interventions appropriate to student needs.** MTSS is typically initiated with universal instruction or student screening, followed by two or more levels of supplemental support, depending on the student's responsiveness to the interventions.
- **Most educational researchers and psychologists advocate that aligning academic and behavioral support systems can produce a variety of efficiencies and is likely to correlate to improved student outcomes.** Recent evidence suggests that poor behavior and academic performance are inherently intertwined, and addressing each with a holistic, mutually reinforcing system may result in the most substantial student gains.
- **Likely the most common form of MTSS in the U.S. education system, Response to Intervention (RTI) relies on high-quality instruction, timely interventions, and the consistent monitoring of student progress to improve academic and behavioral outcomes.** Educational researchers generally favor RTI programs with six key characteristic: universal screening, data-based decision-making, continuous monitoring, student performance, progressive interventions, and implementation fidelity.
- **Most RTI models use one of two basic intervention models: the problem-solving model or the standard protocol model.** The problem-solving model generally uses a broad-based team of school personnel to identify and implement a student-specific intervention, and evaluate and modify the intervention along the way. The standard protocol model requires that educators implement a research-based curriculum with strict adherence to intervention protocols.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered behavioral support model that is commonly paired with academic RTI systems.** PBIS uses a three-tiered structure, practically identical to the RTI model, placing at-risk students in successive levels of interventions.
- **PBIS typically begins with defining clear and concise behavioral expectations for all students at the school.** These expectations are typically articulated as three to five positive statements regarding appropriate behavior and should be displayed as posters in prominent locations throughout the school.

- **Secondary and tertiary PBIS interventions generally strive to look beyond a student's actions and identify the underlying functions of problematic behavior.** Once a hypothesis regarding behavioral functions is formed, educators and other members of a PBIS team design an appropriate intervention and use student-response data to modify the intervention or move the student to subsequent stages of intervention.
- **Universal screening within an academic or behavioral RTI system is typically repeated up to three times each year to monitor students' progress over time and identify the evolution of students' needs.** Schools and districts commonly norm-referenced screening tools in conjunction with classroom data to form a holistic assessment of student progress, achievement, and responsiveness.
- Based in the recognition that minority students account for a higher percentage of behavioral referrals than their Caucasian counterparts, **Culturally Responsive PBIS (CRPBIS) uses broad-based support to design interventions that are more suited to a student's demographic and cultural background.** Common CRPBIS practices include collaboration with family members, tracking behavioral problems for both dominant and non-dominant demographic groups, and providing culturally relevant professional development for certified and non-certified staff.

SECTION I: MULTI-TIERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In this section, Hanover Research provides an overview of the most common multi-tiered support systems employed in elementary and secondary education settings across the United States. This section begins with a general description of MTSS and proceeds with a discussion of the Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support. This section also includes a discussion of the importance of aligning academic and behavioral support systems, as well as describing the general structure and ideology surrounding various intervention and support frameworks. The section concludes with a generalized discussion of best practices for implementing MTSS.

Treatments of the term ‘multi-tiered support systems’ are widely variable. One oft-cited definition states that MTSS is “...a coherent continuum of evidence-based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring and instructional decision-making to empower each student to achieve high standards.”⁴ While many resources use the term interchangeably with Response to Intervention (RTI), others identify MTSS as a comprehensive framework and RTI as a more targeted academic system of intervention and evaluation.⁵ This report generally treats MTSS as an umbrella term, covering all variety of **student support mechanisms in which students with academic or behavioral problems are placed in successive support levels based on their responsiveness at the previous level.**

A review of current literature reveals a number of elements common to all multi-tiered support systems. In general, the support structure is initiated with broad-based instruction delivered to the entire student body, creating a clear and consistent base of knowledge throughout the grade-level or school. Students who exhibit academic or behavioral problems are then transitioned to a subsequent level of support, typically involving more intensive interventions and small-group or individual instruction. Again, nonresponsive students progress to a third level, characterized by high-intensity interventions and individualized instruction. Though MTSS models allow for flexibility in the number of intervention levels, most educational researchers and practitioners advocate a three-tier structure.⁶

⁴ Meinders, D. and Reynolds, V. “California’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI2) Implementation Survey Preliminary Results.” WestEd. 2012, p. 7.

<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2012-12/2012-12-5A-ppt.pdf>

⁵ [1] “Response to Intervention.” National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. August, 2012.

<http://nichcy.org/schools-administrators/rti>

[2] “Multi-Tier Systems of Supports.” National Center for Learning Disabilities.

<http://www.nclld.org/images/content/files/hill-briefs/mtss-brief-template.pdf>

⁶ [1] Shapiro, E. “Tiered Instruction and Intervention in a Response to Intervention Model.” RTI Action Network.

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tiered-instruction-and-intervention-rti-model>

[2] “Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention.” The National Center on Response to Intervention at the American Institutes for Research. 2010, p. 3.

http://www.rti4success.org/sites/default/files/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

A Response to Intervention based approach to improving student learning outcomes stresses multiple actions toward one key goal: enhancing the educational experience of diverse students.⁷ Similar to MTSS, there is no singular or universally-accepted definition of RTI.⁸ One common definition, developed by Dr. George Batsche of the University of South Florida, states that RTI is “...**the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress, and applying child response data to important educational decisions.**”⁹

STRUCTURE

The Response to Intervention Network, a program developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, suggests that an RTI framework generally comprises six defining characteristics:¹⁰

- Universal screening;
- Data-based decision-making and problem-solving;
- Continuous progress monitoring;
- Student performance;
- Continuum of evidence-based interventions; and
- Implementation fidelity.

These six characteristics form a general blueprint for the administration of the RTI model. At the building-level, schools should initiate the process early by administering consistent and continuous **universal screenings** and reviewing student performance to identify those students making adequate progress, students requiring additional assistance, and students at high risk of failure without specialized supports. These student screening results then serve as the basis for the **data-based decision making and problem-solving** that determines the course of action for further instruction and interventions. Throughout this process, educators should employ **continuous progress monitoring**, regularly assessing and evaluating **student performance** data to identify trends and adapt interventions, where necessary.¹¹

All RTI structures should also include a **continuum of evidence-based interventions** that is aligned with the general grade-level curriculum, ensuring that a core curriculum is consistently provided for all students and that a modified curriculum is available for

⁷ Wedl, R.. “Response to Intervention: An Alternative to Traditional Eligibility Criteria for Students with Disabilities.” Education Evolving. 2005, p. 19. http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Response_to_Intervention.pdf

⁸ “Response to Intervention.” National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. Op. cit.

⁹ Batsche, G. 2005. Cited in “Response to Intervention and PBIS.” OSEP Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support. Op cit.

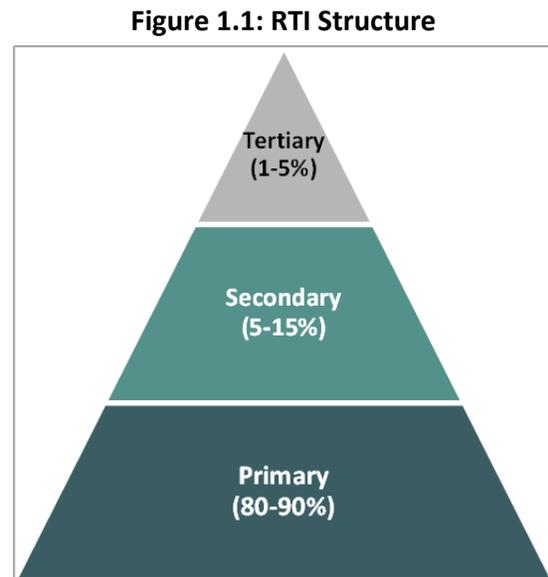
¹⁰ Sugai, G. “School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Response to Intervention.” RTI Action Network. <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/behavior-supports/schoolwidebehavior>

¹¹ Ibid.

students requiring additional structured support. Students who are nonresponsive to this modified core curriculum can then be instructed with a highly specialized and intensive curriculum. The entire RTI model must also utilize team-based structures and balances to enable **implementation fidelity**, ensuring appropriate and accurate delivery of the full-range of implementation practices.¹²

RTI programs are typically designed as a three-tier intervention structure (Figure 1.1). This structure **establishes specific criteria for defining student success and identifying educational and/or behavioral needs, with an emphasis on progressing students to the point at which no further interventions are required.** It is important to note that while RTI is most commonly utilized as a three-tiered model, some schools and districts choose to use customized models with additional tiers.¹³ Broadly speaking, the levels of an RTI model represent the closeness with which an instructor, counselor, or other school administrator must work with a student in order to produce the standardized results.¹⁴

- *Primary prevention:* High-quality core instruction that meets the needs of most students, typically 80 to 90 percent of the student body.
- *Secondary prevention:* Evidence-based intervention(s) of moderate intensity that address the learning or behavioral challenges of most at-risk students, typically 5 to 15 percent of the student body.
- *Tertiary prevention:* Individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity for students who show minimal response to secondary prevention, typically 1 to 5 percent of the student body.



Source: American Institutes for Research

Within each tier, schools or districts may choose to employ multiple levels of intervention. For example, a teacher might choose the most appropriate solution for a given behavioral distraction from among several options, such as modifying the seating chart, using the distraction to redirect focus, or adjusting the difficulty of the lesson. All of these strategies would fall within the primary level of intervention.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention." Op cit. p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 4-5.

SCREENING

RTI programs generally utilize two screening stages to place students appropriately within the designated levels and to determine the most promising tiers of intervention.¹⁵ The first screening stage is universal: all students must complete baseline testing in order for schools to identify specific need-based groupings amongst the entire student body.¹⁶ This screening typically consists of targeted assessments to identify behavioral skills and general academic accuracy – a measure revealing individual differences regarding specific knowledge – as well as fluency – a measure that accounts for differences in both specific knowledge and the speed of processing.¹⁷

Universal screening is typically repeated up to three times each academic year to monitor student progress over time, to identify the specific needs of subsets of the student population, and ensure timely secondary interventions.¹⁸ Such screening also helps educators identify students at risk for learning disabilities, while a transitional level of support ameliorates the over-diagnosis of such impediments.¹⁹

The second screening stage is administered only to those students proceeding to Tier II interventions, and is intended to identify additional needs that must be met on an individual basis. Secondary screening allows students with learning disabilities to be positively identified at consistently high rates of accuracy, without inappropriately diagnosing other students.²⁰

INTERVENTIONS

Most RTI research refers to the existence of two basic models: the **problem-solving** model and the **standard protocol** model.²¹ The problem-solving model relies upon a school-based problem-solving team to identify and implement student-specific intervention strategies and evaluate the success of the intervention along the way. The standard protocol model requires educators to implement a research-based curriculum through a predetermined delivery system with strict adherence to intervention protocols.²² **Although the two models differ in important ways, many authors stress the commonalities between each model,**

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 2-5.

¹⁶ Ikeda, M. Neessen, E., and Witt, J. "Best Practices in Universal Screening." *Best Practices in Psychology*. 2001, p. 1. <http://www.joewitt.org/Downloads/IkedaBPV60.pdf>

¹⁷ Hughes, Charles and Douglas D. Dexter. "Universal Screening within a Response-to-Intervention Model." RTI Action Network. <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/research/universal-screening-within-a-rti-model>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ [1] Ikeda, M. Neessen, E., and Witt, J. Op cit. pp. 1-2.

[2] Hughes, Charles and Douglas D. Dexter. Op cit.

²⁰ Hughes, Charles and Douglas D. Dexter. Op cit.

²¹ [1] Shapiro, Edward S. "The Two Models of RTI: Standard Protocol and Problem Solving." Virginia Department of Education. 2009, pp. 1-3.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virginia_tiered_system_supports/response_intervention/two_models.pdf

[2] Christ, T., Burns, M., and Ysseldyke, J. "Conceptual Confusion within Response-to-Intervention Vernacular: Clarifying Meaningful Differences." November 2005. National Association of School Psychologists. *NASP Communiqué*, 34(3). <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/cq343rti.aspx>

²² "Approaches to RTI." The IRIS Center. http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/rti01_overview/rti01_05.html

including universal screening, high-quality instruction, research-based practices, and interventions that increase in intensity in response to progress monitoring. The primary difference between the two models is the method used to select interventions for students.²³

In practice, differences between the models disappear even further, and some evidence suggests the two models in combination may offer the greatest impact.²⁴ One researcher suggests, for example, that schools implementing a standard protocol model would benefit from problem-solving teams to address the needs of students particularly nonresponsive to intervention.²⁵ Other authors suggest the variation in implementation from school to school has led to the rise of numerous models, noting "...it is possible to construct many different models to address the many nuances of practice and contextual factors that exist in any educational setting."²⁶

Though there are many documented models, the RTI concept leaves most decisions regarding structure and design to the educators who implement the program.

Still, other researchers suggest the variation in models implemented from school to school reflects less a philosophical emphasis on school-specific programming and more the "...limited guidance from theory and research at the time they adopted their practices."²⁷ While district and school leaders may access a wealth of information on RTI implementation, the RTI concept still leaves most decisions to the educators who implement the program. Though this freedom offers districts an opportunity to tailor the program to the needs of the student population, it also places a large planning burden on educators across all levels and may also limit opportunities to apply existing programs that have been designed with other districts in mind.

It should be noted that the interventions employed in an RTI framework are intended as *supplements* to high-quality, research-based core academic instruction.²⁸ Under the RTI framework, students in need of additional learning support should continue to experience normal classroom instruction to the maximum extent possible, with interventions occurring in addition to, and not as substitutions for, standard core instruction.²⁹

²³ Christ, T., Burns, M., and Ysseldyke, J. Op cit.

²⁴ Shapiro, Edward S. "The Two Models of RTI: Standard Protocol and Problem Solving." Op cit.

²⁵ Kovalski, J.F. "Potential Pitfalls of Response to Intervention." *Handbook of Response to Intervention*. Springer. 2007, p. 4.

²⁶ Kratochwill, T, Clements, M., Kalymon, K. "Response to Intervention: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Implementation." *Handbook of Response to Intervention*. Springer. 2007, p. 1.

²⁷ Mellard, D., Stern, A., and Woods, K. "RTI School-Based Practices and Evidence-Based Models." *Focus on Exceptional Children*. 43:6, 2011, p. 1.

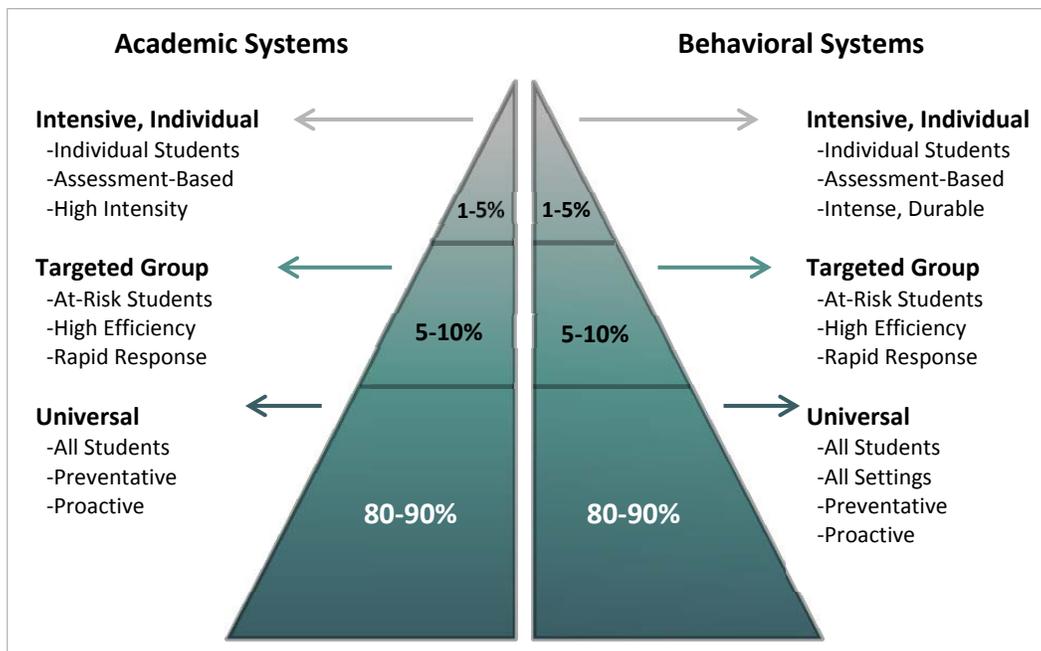
²⁸ "Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention." Op cit. p. 6.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 12.

ALIGNING ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL RTI

As the correlation between behavioral and academic problems has become better understood, educational researchers and psychologists have increasingly advocated integrating and aligning structures designed to support at risk-students in these areas.³⁰ Though RTI for academic and behavioral supports share many similarities, notably the basic three-tiered intervention structure, scholarly literature identifies certain key differences (Figure 1.2).³¹ While the academic RTI process is generally initiated with a universal screening assessment for skills deficits, **the behavioral process often starts with an assessment of the school-wide climate and the provision of universal behavioral supports.** Similarly, though the structure of an academic RTI enables the use of standardized assessments, multi-tiered behavioral supports generally require a somewhat more reactionary approach.³² Educators use observational techniques to identify those students who are nonresponsive to the core behavior curriculum and make accommodations for further support.³³

Figure 1.2: RTI Academic and Behavioral Support System Structure



Source: Adapted from OSEP Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support³⁴

Despite these and other inherent differences, developing parallel structures for academic and behavioral interventions can allow for certain efficiencies in student support and may

³⁰ [1] Goodman, S., et al. Op cit.

[2] Nelson, J. et al. Op cit.

³¹ Goodman, S., et. al. Op cit.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Response to Intervention and PBIS." OSEP Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support.
<http://www.pbis.org/school/rti.aspx>

be associated with improved student achievement outcomes.³⁵ The following subsection presents a discussion of a common multi-tiered behavioral intervention system, highlighting structural similarities with the RTI framework presented above.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), commonly referred to as School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS), is a **proactive approach to problem behavior prevention, supported by additional interventions for small groups and individual students with further needs.**³⁶ Developed in the mid-1980s, the approach has received wide support from educational researchers and practitioners, including from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs.³⁷ While PBIS is frequently discussed in the context of supporting students with cognitive and physical disabilities, there is a general consensus within the body of literature that the approach is appropriate for all types of students.³⁸ Though there is tremendous variability in the structure and implementation of PBIS models, researchers George Sugai, Robert Horner, and Claudia Vincent with the U.S. Department of Education’s National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS (PBIS TA) note that programs should address a number of consistent elements, including: prevention, school culture and behavioral expectations, recognition of appropriate behavior, data, and investment (Figure 1.3).³⁹

Figure 1.3: Core Elements of Successful PBIS Models

ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Prevention	Focus on preventing the development and occurrence of problem behavior, which is more effective, cost-efficient, and productive than responding after patterns have become engrained.
School Culture and Behavioral Expectations	Because children come from many different backgrounds, schools must define core social expectations and overtly teach the behaviors and skills associated with these expectations.
Recognition of Appropriate Behavior	Students should receive recognition of appropriate behavior at rates that exceed the rates of recognition for rules violations and problem behaviors.
Data	Gather data on what behaviors are being observed and use this information to guide behavior support decisions. Data should include information related to the setting of the problem behavior.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ [1] “SWPBIS for Beginners.” National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

http://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis_for_beginners/default.aspx

[2] Horner, R., Sugai, G., and Vincent, C. “School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Investing in Student Success.” Impact: Feature Issue on Fostering Success in School and Beyond for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders. 2005, p. 4. <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/182/182.pdf>

³⁷ “OSEP Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support.” National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

<http://www.pbis.org/>

³⁸ “About Us.” National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. http://www.pbis.org/about_us/default.aspx

³⁹ Horner, R., Sugai, G., and Vincent, C. Op cit. p. 4.

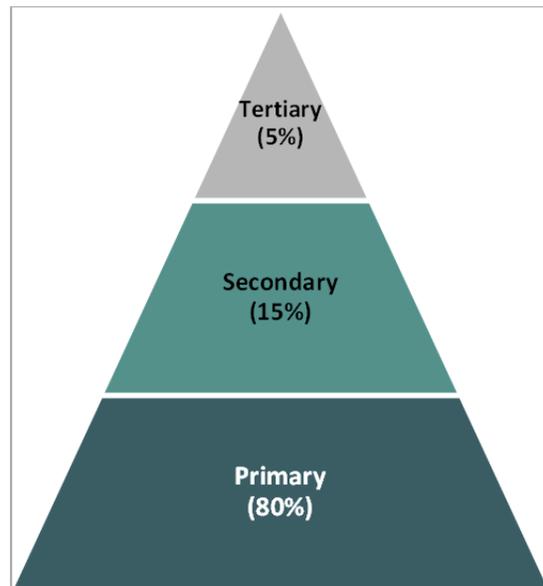
ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Investment	Districts and schools should invest in the systems – teams, policies, funding, administrative support, and data structures – that support the implementation of effective practices.

Source: Sugai, Horner, and Vincent (2005)⁴⁰

Similar to the generalized RTI structure discussed in this report, **PBIS is typically envisaged as a three-tier intervention framework, with students progressing from basic to intensive behavioral supports, as needed** (Figure 1.4).⁴¹ Throughout the PBIS model, instruction and behavioral interventions are closely coordinated with the needs of individual students, and behavioral data form the basis for all decision-making. Though PBIS and RTI are structurally similar, guiding students through universal, secondary, and tertiary interventions and rooted in differentiated instruction, the general design of interventions in the two models is fundamentally different. According to Dr. Timothy Lewis of the University of Minnesota, PBIS interventions typically include the following criteria at each level:⁴²

- **Primary Prevention:** Includes supports for all students and features a clear articulation of expectations, strategies to deliver expectations, consistent enforcement, and the development of routines.
- **Secondary Prevention:** Targets smaller groups of students requiring further intervention and uses strategies related to small-group instruction in self-management and social-skill development.
- **Tertiary Prevention:** Encompasses support for individual students displaying chronic behavioral problems, utilizing “functional behavioral assessment” and forming the basis for an “individual positive.”

Figure 1.4: PBIS Structure



Source: Sugai and Horner (2002)⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁴¹ Sugai, G. and Horner, R. “The Evolution of Discipline Practices: School-Wide Positive Behavior Support.” *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*. 12:1/2. 2002, p. 38.

http://faculty.unlv.edu/sloe/Courses/EPY%20715/SWPBS%20articles/Sugai%20and%20Horner_2002.pdf

⁴² Lewis, Timothy J. 2005. “Implementing School-wide Positive Behavior Supports,” p. 26. *Impact: Feature Issue on Fostering Success in School and Beyond for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders*.

<http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/182/182.pdf>

⁴³ Sugai, G. and Horner, R. “The Evolution of Discipline Practices: School-Wide Positive Behavior Support.” Op cit. p. 38.

PRIMARY PREVENTION: SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND RECOGNIZING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

First-tier behavioral supports are implemented for the entire student body and are generally seen as a preventative measure, designed to eliminate much problematic behavior before it occurs. According to the PBIS TA, primary prevention in a PBIS structure consists of “...rules, routines, and physical arrangements that are developed and taught by school staff to prevent initial occurrences of behavior that the school would like to target for change.”⁴⁴ A well-represented team of educators – including administrators and general and special education teachers – should convene and develop **three to five easily remembered behavioral expectations** that are prominently posted throughout the school.⁴⁵ These expectations should **specifically address a negative behavior using consistently positive language** and phrasing, such as:⁴⁶

- Be respectful of self, others, and surroundings.
- Be responsible and prepared at all times.
- Be ready to follow directions and procedures.

Once behavioral expectations have been clearly articulated and agreed upon by the wider teaching staff, the behavioral team must then develop protocol for teaching the expectations to the students.⁴⁷ Wherever possible, the team should create a matrix depicting practical examples of positive behaviors associated with each expectation (Figure 1.5).⁴⁸ Some schools have chosen to emphasize appropriate behavior by allotting time at the beginning of the academic year to walk students through various stations around the campus and demonstrate examples of positive behavior at each. For example, a bus may be brought to the school, and children may practice lining up and observing appropriate personal space while boarding the bus.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ “Primary Prevention.” National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.
http://www.pbis.org/school/primary_level/default.aspx

⁴⁵ [1] “SWPBIS for Beginners.” Op cit.
[2] “Primary Prevention.”. Op cit.

⁴⁶ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: “The Jonesboro Way.” National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.
<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/documents/Student/Sample%20Behavior%20Expectations/jonesboroposter.jpg>

⁴⁷ “Primary Prevention.”. Op cit.

⁴⁸ “SWPBIS for Beginners.” Op cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Figure 1.5: Behavioral Matrix

EXPECTATION	SCHOOL AREA			
	BUS	CAFETERIA	RESTROOM	PLAYGROUND
Respect Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep feet and hands where they belong. • Throw unwanted items in waste basket. • Keep food and drinks in backpack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place tray on window shelf after scraping leftovers into waste basket. • Wipe table with sponge provided. • Clean food spills off floor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flush toilet after use. • Use two squirts of soap to wash hands. • Throw paper towels in wastebasket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report any graffiti or broken equipment to adult on duty. • Return Playground equipment to proper area. • Use equipment as it was designed.

Source: PBIS TA⁵⁰

Finally, the school's PBIS team will determine how to recognize students meeting the behavioral expectations. Research indicates that **praise for specific behaviors is an important component of encouraging and propagating that type of behavior throughout the student body.**⁵¹ Some schools choose to hand out small pieces of paper that may be redeemed for physical rewards to students observed exhibiting appropriate behavior in common areas across the campus.⁵²

SECONDARY PREVENTION: TARGETED SUPPORT

Students who are nonresponsive to primary prevention supports, typically seen as those students with two to five office referrals each year or consistent minor problem behavior, may require more targeted interventions.⁵³ Common secondary prevention practices generally involve small group or individualized strategies administered by typical school personnel, and have been shown to be effective for approximately two-thirds of referred students.⁵⁴ Individualized interventions at the secondary level should include a basic assessment to **identify what function the problem behavior serves for a student**, and the formulation of an intervention plan may include one or more of the following strategies:⁵⁵

- Teaching the student to use new skills as a replacement for problem behaviors;
- Rearranging the environment so that problems can be prevented and desirable behaviors can be encouraged; and
- Monitoring, evaluating, and reassessing this simple plan over time.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Primary Prevention." Op cit.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ [1] "Secondary Level – Frequently Asked Questions." National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. http://www.pbis.org/school/secondary_level/faqs.aspx

[2] "Targeted Behavior Interventions – Check-in/Check-out Introduction." Michigan Department of Education. 2009, p. 7. <http://miblsi.cenmi.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=znbJrNL439Y%3d&tabid=739>

⁵⁴ "Secondary Level – Frequently Asked Questions." Op cit.

⁵⁵ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: Ibid.

One common secondary prevention intervention is the Behavior Education Program (BEP), commonly referred to as the **Check In/Check Out (CICO)** system. Each morning, students in the CICO program meet briefly with an adult and are given a point sheet that they carry for the remainder of the day. Teachers and school staff then record comments on the student's behavior on the sheet, and the students earn tokens for positive behaviors that can be exchanged for material rewards.⁵⁶ These activities are coupled with regular parent communication and teacher review of student progress.⁵⁷ Data should then be used to determine future interventions for the student, including whether the student should remain in the program, if the program should be revised, if the student requires a tertiary intervention, or if the student is prepared to exit the program altogether.⁵⁸

The current body of research is widely supportive of the CICO method, with **multiple studies indicating a correlation between student participation and improved social behavior at the elementary and middle school levels.**⁵⁹ Furthermore, the model has been shown to be effective at the high school level, when combined with academic tutoring.⁶⁰

TERTIARY PREVENTION: FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT PLAN

Tertiary prevention focuses on students who continue to exhibit more severe chronic behavioral problems, and typically includes two elements: a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and the development of an individualized intervention plan.⁶¹ Functional Behavior Assessment uses a variety of techniques to generate an understanding of the specific purpose of a problem behavior, **looking beyond the student's actions and examining the root causes of the behavior.**⁶² The Maryland State Department of Education recommends that students are directed to tertiary behavioral supports when:⁶³

- Standard school or classroom management strategies have been ineffective;
- The behavior occurs with a high level of intensity and/or frequency;

⁵⁶ Myers, D., Briere, D., and Simonsen, B. "Lessons Learned from Implementing a Check-in/Check-out Behavioral Program in an Urban Middle School." *Beyond Behavior*. 19:2, 2010.

⁵⁷ Targeted Behavior Interventions – Check-in/Check-out Introduction." Op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁸ "Check In Check Out (CICO)." Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

<http://miblsi.cenmi.org/MiBLSiModel/Implementation/ElementarySchools/TierIIISupports/Behavior/TargetBehaviorInterventions/CheckInCheckOut.aspx>

⁵⁹ Fairbanks, S., Sugai, G., Gardino, D., and Lathrop, M. "Response to Intervention: Examining Classroom Behavior Support in Second Grade." *Exceptional Children*. 73:3. 2007, pp. 306-307.

[http://iss.schoolwires.com/cms/lib4/NC01000579/Centricity/ModuleInstance/17226/Intervention_-_Check_In_Check_Out_\(Elementary\).pdf](http://iss.schoolwires.com/cms/lib4/NC01000579/Centricity/ModuleInstance/17226/Intervention_-_Check_In_Check_Out_(Elementary).pdf)

⁶⁰ Swain-Bradway, J. "An Analysis of a Secondary Level Intervention for High School Students at risk of failure: The High School Behavior Education Program." The University of Oregon. 2009, p. .

https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/10262/Swain-Bradway_Jessica_L_phd2009sp.pdf?sequence=1

⁶¹ "Tertiary Level – Frequently Asked Questions." National Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

http://www.pbis.org/school/tertiary_level/faqs.aspx

⁶² "Functional Behavior Assessment." Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. <http://cecp.air.org/fba/>

⁶³ Discipline of Students with Disabilities." Maryland State Department of Education. 2009, p. 11..

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/5F4F5041-02EE-4F3A-B495-5E4B3C850D3E/22802/DisciplineofStudentswithDisabilities_September2009.pdf

- The student is at risk of exclusion and/or suspension; and/or
- A more restrictive placement or a more intrusive intervention is being considered.

Similar to primary and secondary behavioral interventions, tertiary behavioral supports are best approached using collaborative and comprehensive practices, incorporating a wide-range of school-based expertise.⁶⁴ The FBA process should include a number of stakeholders and follow a series of steps, including: **defining the behavioral problem, collecting and analyzing data** around the problem that could explain the function, **formulating a hypothesis** regarding the function/motivation of the issue, and **systematic testing of the hypothesis** by changing variables related to the student’s instruction or environment.⁶⁵

Information gathered and analyzed during the FBA may then be used to develop an intervention that most effectively meets the student’s individual behavioral needs.⁶⁶ This intervention, frequently referred to as a **Behavior Support Plan (BSP)**, may involve modifying the students environment, teaching replacement skills that address the problem behavior’s function, introducing consequences that may deter problematic behavior, and addressing a crisis management plan.⁶⁷ Goals established in the BSP should be based on a “...positive, long-term vision for the student, developed with input from the student, the student’s family, and the support team.”⁶⁸

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

The demographic composition of the national K-12 student body is rapidly evolving. Between 1993 and 2012, the number of students enrolled in elementary and secondary education in the United States increased by nearly 4.4 million – or approximately 9 percent – bringing the total U.S. student body to 53.9 million pupils. **While the number of white students at U.S. elementary and secondary schools declined by nearly 9 percent, the number of minority students increased by nearly 53 percent over the period.**⁶⁹ Recent evidence from the United States Census Bureau indicates that, at some point in the coming decade, there will be no clear racial majority in U.S. K-12 student body.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ “Functional Behavior Assessment.” Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice. Op cit.

⁶⁵ Gable, R.. “Functional Assessment of Classroom Behavior Problems,” *Impact: Feature Issue on Fostering Success in School and Beyond for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders*. 2005, p. 17.
<http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/182/182.pdf>

⁶⁶ “Tertiary Level – Frequently Asked Questions.” Op cit.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Table A-1: School Enrollment of the Population 3 Years Old and Over, by Level and Control of School, Race, and Hispanic Origin, October 1955 to 2012.” United States Census Bureau.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/historical/>

⁷⁰ [1] Frey, W. “A Demographic Tipping Point Among America’s Three-Year-Olds.” The Brookings Institute. February 7, 2011. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/02/07-population-frey>

[2] Boser, U. “Teacher Diversity Matters: A State-by-State Analysis of Teachers of Color.” Center for American Progress. November 9, 2011.

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2011/11/09/10657/teacher-diversity-matters/>

This changing demography has created a new understanding of the cultural nature of education, and how inherent differences in student backgrounds, linguistics, and ability may pose serious impediments to achievement.⁷¹ Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education notes that behavioral issues are not evenly distributed across the student body, as **African American and Latino students are approximately three and 1.5 times more likely to face expulsion or suspension than their white peers, respectively.**⁷² Recently, many education researchers and practitioners have called to address this gap by incorporating more culturally sensitive practices into behavioral interventions.⁷³

Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (CRPBIS) follows the same general structure and framework as PBIS, albeit with a greater emphasis on the culturally relevant elements underlying behavior.⁷⁴ However, the concept of culture itself can be nebulous, and the intricacies of each culture present within a given K-12 school setting too complex to be accounted for in a school-wide plan.⁷⁵ Accordingly, CRPBIS accommodates culturally relevant practices primarily through three mechanisms:⁷⁶

- Collaborating with family members in teaching and reinforcing school-wide behavioral expectations;
- Monitoring disproportionality in office referrals for dominant and non-dominant groups through analysis in data trends disaggregated by demographic characteristics; and
- Providing professional development aimed at increasing practitioner’s awareness of demographic differences, allowing them to interpret individual student’s problem behaviors correctly.

Though typically visualized in the same three-tier structure as PBIS, researchers warn that **CRPBIS is an emerging ideology and that there is currently not a clear consensus regarding best practices in the design and development of an appropriate framework.**⁷⁷ However, most practitioners agree that CRPBIS is a fundamental step in altering the cultural assumptions embedded in the U.S. educational system, and must involve a wide range of stakeholders, including educators, administrators, students, families, and community members.⁷⁸ Properly executed, CRPBIS can help create a shared agenda for including

⁷¹ Bal, A., Kozleski, E., and Thorius, K. “Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Support Matters.” Equity Alliance. 2012, p. 4. http://www.equityallianceatasu.org/sites/default/files/CRPBIS_Matters.pdf

⁷² Smith-Evans, L., Levenson, M., and Smith, K. “Culturally Relevant Practices and PBIS.” Wisconsin PBIS Network. p. 14. http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/documents/Forum11_Presentations/E6_EvanSmith_et_al.pptx

⁷³ [1] Tobin, T. and Vincent, C. “Culturally Competent School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: From Theory to Evaluation.” University of Oregon. 2010. p. 8.

http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/presentations/APBS_tobin_vincent.pptx

[2] Bal, A. et al. Op cit. p. 4.

⁷⁴ Bal, A. et al. Op cit. pp. 6-7.

⁷⁵ [1] Bal, A. et al. Op cit. p. 6.

[2] Smith-Evans, L., Levenson, M., and Smith, K. Op cit. p. 19.

⁷⁶ Bulleted items taken verbatim from: Bal, A. et al. Op cit. p. 6.

⁷⁷ Smith-Evans, L., Levenson, M., and Smith, K. Op cit. p. 47.

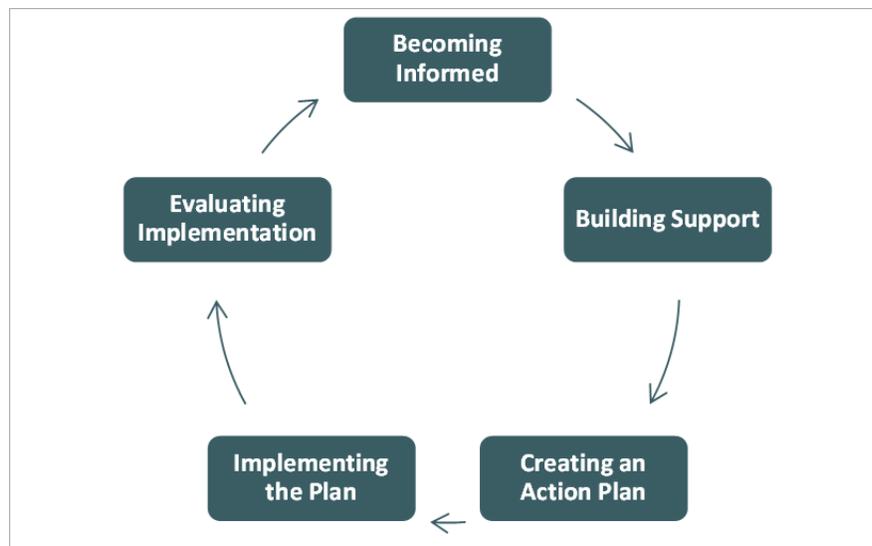
⁷⁸ Bal, A. et al. Op cit. p. 6.

culturally-relevant practices in school-wide behavioral support systems and help identify what elements of student behavior will be measured and how these will help inform disciplinary practices.⁷⁹

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN RTI PROGRAM

The IRIS Center describes the growth of an RTI program as a cyclical process through which district and school leaders become informed, build support, plan, implement, and evaluate in order to continue making program improvements (Figure 1.6).⁸⁰ This cycle requires careful planning throughout all stages of RTI program development, sensitivity to the concerns of all stakeholders, and responsiveness to issues that arise.

Figure 1.6: Cyclical RTI Process



Source: Iris Center

In 2008, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) produced two thorough, research-based blueprints for RTI implementation at the district and school levels. The blueprints were developed by a team of writers that included administrators and intervention specialists and reviewed by 98 leaders in education from around the country.⁸¹ The school- and district-level blueprints each describe three components, **emphasizing careful planning, clear delineation of responsibilities, high-quality instructional practices, support and professional development for educators across all levels, and continuous review of student progress and program outcomes to improve practices.**⁸² An abridged

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 7.

⁸⁰ "Stages of Implementing Change." The IRIS Center. http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/rti-leaders/cresource/what-information-does-mr-irwin-need-to-consider-before-proceeding/rti_leaders_01/

⁸¹ "Response to Intervention: Blueprints for Implementation – District Level" National Association of State Directors of Special Education. 2008, pp. iv-vi. <http://www.nasdse.org/Portals/0/DISTRICT.pdf>

⁸² [1] Ibid.

[2] "Response to Intervention: Blueprints for Implementation – School Level" National Association of State Directors of Special Education. 2008. <http://www.nasdse.org/Portals/0/SCHOOL.pdf>

version of the components of the district-level and school-level NASDSE blueprints are provided as Appendix I and Appendix II of this report, respectively. The full blueprints, including the steps districts and schools must take to fulfill each action, may be accessed on the NASDSE website.⁸³

⁸³ "Response to Intervention Project." National Association of State Directors of Special Education. <http://www.nasdse.org/projects/responsetointerventionrtiproject/tabid/411/default.aspx>

SECTION II: DISTRICT PROFILES

In this section, Hanover Research presents profiles of two school districts – Broward County Public Schools and Rapid City Area Schools – that have implemented MTSS programs. These profiles provide information related to program structure and implementation, as well as critical processes employed in each system tier.

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) is a large, suburban school district serving Florida’s Fort Lauderdale metropolitan area. In January 2010, BCPS’s Department of Psychological Services released a comprehensive manual detailing the framework for a multi-tiered system of supports to be implemented at each of the district’s school.

Based largely in the Florida Department of Education’s framework, the BCPS MTSS program involves two critical components working in concert to support student achievement: Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) and Response to Intervention.⁸⁴

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fort Lauderdale, FL

- Total Students: 256,472
- Total Teachers: 15,572
- Total Schools: 341

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Initially developed by Harvard Medical School’s Dr. Ross Greene, CPS is a model of student support based on two fundamental tenets: i) that children’s social, emotional, and behavioral challenges are most likely a manifestation of lagging cognitive skills; and ii) that resolving these issues requires addressing the problem’s root cause.⁸⁵ BCPS defines CPS as “...a method of determining a solution for an agreed-upon problem that includes a variety of stakeholders with multiple perspective.”⁸⁶ The system emphasizes the collection and analysis of data to create a complete picture of the problem and inform decision-making.⁸⁷

BCPS conceptualizes CPS as a four-stage process emphasizing a data-driven understanding of student academic and behavioral problems (Figure 2.1). Throughout each stage, educators are encouraged to **monitor student progress using quantifiable indicators, rather than anecdotal or intuitive processes, and formulate hypotheses as the underlying cause of the issue.** Once hypotheses have been formed, teachers work with a CPS team to design and implement an appropriate intervention with intensity and individualized

⁸⁴ “Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention (CPS/RTI): A Multi-Tiered System of Supports.” Broward County Public Schools. 2012, p. 20.

<http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/STUDENTSUPPORT/psychologicalservices/pdf/CPS%20Rti%20Manual.pdf>

⁸⁵ [1] “CPS Essentials.” Center for Collaborative Problem Solving. <http://www.ccps.info/cpsessentials/index.html>

[2] “About Dr. Greene.” Center for Collaborative Problem Solving. <http://www.ccps.info/bio/bio.html>

⁸⁶ “Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention (CPS/RTI): A Multi-Tiered System of Supports.” Op cit. p. 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

instruction tailored to the student's specific needs.⁸⁸ Over the course of the intervention, teachers and CPS team members compare the student's achievement data to his or her pre-intervention baseline to determine whether the student is making the desired progress.⁸⁹

Figure 2.1: Stage in the BCPS Collaborative Problem Solving Model

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Stage I: Identify the Problem	Pinpoint the problem in measurable terms.	Not: "The student is lazy." Instead: "The student's rate of work completion is 40%, while the expectation is 100%."
Stage II: Analyze the Problem	Consider the student and instructional environment to generate hypotheses about causes.	Not: "The student must have a disability and needs to be tested because his/her rate of work completion is low." Instead: "The student has not mastered key skills; the work assigned is above his/her instructional level."
Stage III: Select and Implement an Intervention	Use evidence-based interventions to address the identified problem.	Not: "I'll provide preferential seating for the student near my desk." Instead: "I'll use targeted curricula to supplement core instruction in the area of difficulty."
Stage IV: Progress Monitor and Evaluate Effectiveness	Use data-based graphing to monitor intervention outcomes.	Not: Anecdotal or intuitive tracking of intervention outcomes. Instead: Graphing of work completion on a weekly basis during the intervention period compared to the baseline.

Source: Broward County Public Schools⁹⁰

Though CPS forms the basic infrastructure for student interventions at BCPS, the RTI concept adds three important elements that are reflected throughout the system: i) a **tiered system of interventions** that become progressively intense and individualized; ii) an insistence upon **evidence-based interventions** with a strong base of research support; and iii) the **systematic monitoring** of student's progress within each intervention tier.⁹¹ The CPS process is conflated with the general RTI structure, creating a progressive intervention protocol consisting of universal instruction and screening, strategic or targeted interventions, and intensive interventions.⁹² BCPS also sets specific guidelines for the involvement of CPS team members in each successive tier, generally bringing a greater number of personnel and wider range of expertise into the fold as the intensity of the intervention increases.⁹³

The types of information required to stage effective interventions in the CPS/RTI are fundamentally different than those traditionally used to diagnose and treat students'

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁹² "Collaborative Problem Solving Process Flowchart," Broward County Public Schools.

<http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/STUDENTSUPPORT/psychologicalservices/pdf/CPS%20STUFF/CPS%20Process%20Flowchart.pdf>

⁹³ "Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Training." Broward County Public Schools. p. 5.

[http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/STUDENTSUPPORT/psychologicalservices/pdf/CPS%20STUFF/CPS%20RtI%20Basics%20\(Training%20Module\).pdf](http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/STUDENTSUPPORT/psychologicalservices/pdf/CPS%20STUFF/CPS%20RtI%20Basics%20(Training%20Module).pdf)

academic and behavioral problems.⁹⁴ The collection and analysis of data in BCPS's CPS/RTI program is addressed with a three-part approach, including a teacher interview, records review, and observational baseline data (Figure 2.2).⁹⁵ BCPS protocols emphasize the importance of establishing a baseline student performance measure for all students during first-tier instruction in order to develop an understanding of general student progress and to assess the efficacy of subsequent interventions.⁹⁶

Figure 2.2: Data Collection and Analysis in BCPS's CPS/RTI System

DATA SOURCE	COMPONENTS	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
Record Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal / Family Records • Educational • Medical • Electronic • "Other" Records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What languages are spoken at home? • Are there any pertinent family situations? • Has the student attended school regularly? • Are there any past academic/behavioral problems? • Does the student have medical problems?
Teacher Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Clarification • Understand functions • Identify Skill Deficits • Identify Production Problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student/parent identify the problem? • Does the student understand instructions? • To which types of help is the student receptive? • Is the parent available to assist interventions?
Observational Baseline Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Systematic Observation • Understand Student Baseline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the frequency of problem behavior? • What is the duration of problem behavior? • What percent of the time is the student engaged in the behavior?

Source: Broward County Public Schools⁹⁷

RAPID CITY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rapid City Area School District is a mid-sized suburban school district serving the greater Rapid City area in South Dakota. RCAS has adopted the South Dakota Department of Education's model for RTI, and has implemented the program in collaboration with a regional professional learning community.⁹⁸ Consistent with the generalized RTI

model presented in Section I of this report, RCAS conducts universal screenings and behavioral assessments of all students before making individual decisions regarding the necessity of Tier II and III interventions. The 2011-2013 District Improvement Plan discusses

RAPID CITY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT Rapid City, SD

- Total Students: 13,382
- Total Teachers: 885
- Total Schools: 28

⁹⁴ "Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention (CPS/RTI): A Multi-Tiered System of Supports." Op cit. p. 7.

⁹⁵ "Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Training." Op cit. p. 9.

⁹⁶ "Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention (CPS/RTI): A Multi-Tiered System of Supports." Op cit. p. 7.

⁹⁷ "Collaborative Problem Solving and Response to Intervention Training." Op cit. pp. 10-51.

⁹⁸ "Response to Intervention Implementation Guide: The South Dakota Model." South Dakota Department of Education. 2012. http://doe.sd.gov/oess/documents/sped_Rti_ImplementationGuide.pdf

the details of the district's assessments, which are differentiated by the elementary and secondary levels.⁹⁹

The assessments used to determine progress for individual students include the following: Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) of oral fluency; elementary literacy Observation Survey Tasks which include assessments on letter identification, concepts about print, and text reading level; the elementary math counting assessments, hiding assessments, and the grouping by 10's assessment. At the secondary level, the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment and the Scholastic Math Inventory results are reviewed. In addition, WriteToLearn assessment results and Achievement Series assessments results are also considered.

All school-based certified personnel are provided with comprehensive training to prepare them for teaching in a multi-tiered instructional program. Moreover, **teachers meet frequently to discuss student progress and monitor how both groups and individual students are responding to instruction.**¹⁰⁰ Mirroring the South Dakota RTI model, teachers and staff use assessments and data to screen individuals, diagnose their difficulties, and monitor their progress.¹⁰¹

Once the RTI team refers a student for Tier II or III supports, a school-level intervention strategist conducts a classroom observation and schedules a meeting to discuss the child's academic or behavioral situation. After observing the child, the intervention strategist meets with a Problem Solving Team (PST) - comprising teachers, specialists, social workers, counselors, and behavioral strategists – as well as the child's parents, to discuss the results of assessments and other data. The **primary goal of the meeting is to develop an intervention strategy to assist the child based on the available data** and to determine whether to notify the special education pre-referral team.¹⁰²

All RCAS buildings have intervention strategists, whose responsibilities include monitoring student progress and providing instruction for students requiring Tier II and III interventions, as necessary. The intervention strategist works in collaboration with the building's PST to assess students for interventions and progress toward reaching grade level goals. In addition, the strategist acts as a liaison between the Multi-Disciplinary Action Team (MDAT), various PSTs, parents, and teachers to ensure active discussion around the needs and progress of each student.¹⁰³ The MDAT is responsible for managing potential cases of learning disabilities and properly identifying students in need of special education.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ "Rapid City Area Schools 2011-2013 District Improvement Plan," Rapid City Area Schools. p. 51.
<https://public.rcas.org/administration/FP/1011%20DRAFT%20RCAS%20District%20Improvement%20Plan/2011-2013%20RCAS%20District%20Improvement%20Plan.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ "School Improvement Grant Request Form: Horace Mann Elementary," Rapid City Area Schools. p. 7.
<http://doe.sd.gov/stimulus/documents/HoraceMann.pdf>

¹⁰¹ "Response to Intervention Implementation Guide: The South Dakota Model," Op. cit. p. 5.

¹⁰² "Rapid City Area Schools 2011-2013 District Improvement Plan." Op. cit. p. 51.

¹⁰³ [1] Ibid., p. 47.

[2] "Rapid City Area School District 51-4: Intervention Specialist (Learning Center)." Applitrack.
<http://www.applitrack.com/rcas/onlineapp/1BrowseFile.aspx?id=8530>

¹⁰⁴ "Rapid City Area Schools 2011-2013 District Improvement Plan." Op. cit., p. 52.

The RCAS District Improvement Plan stresses the importance of parent involvement in RTI and, more broadly, in the entire educational program. Specifically, the **administration encourages parents to attend all RTI meetings and to be involved in the process concerning their son or daughter**, including the meetings during which teachers and support staff discuss their child’s progress. Additionally, staff members make home visits and explain assessment results to parents as necessary.¹⁰⁵

RCAS also highlights a few of the ways it helps teachers manage providing additional attention and support within a constrained schedule. For example, the most at-risk kindergarten and first grade students receive Reading Recovery instruction until they meet predetermined benchmarks. Additionally, the district’s elementary schools follow a system of ‘buddy teachers,’ where a reading specialist supports a primary teacher during reading time, ensuring that pupils have two certified instructors during critical literacy instruction.¹⁰⁶ By the time students are in high

The district uses a “buddy teacher” program, pairing a reading specialist with general teachers to ensure that two certified personnel are present for critical literacy instruction.

school, support becomes more optional and flexible. However, the Academic Resource Center (ARC) provides services for students, either on an as-needed basis or a regular schedule. The ARC provides tutorial assistance through at least one certified teacher, in addition to paraprofessionals, typically before and after the school day.

The example of one of the district’s elementary sites – Horace Mann Elementary – provides insight into the value of time allocated to teacher collaboration and development. In discussing the school’s accomplishments and recent efforts, the administration notes that during the 2009-2010 school year, the **teachers benefitted from an “Early Release” Wednesday designed to provide time for collaboration, discussion, and joint planning among teachers.**¹⁰⁷ The practice has led to a “highly effective data driven dialogue” informing actionable responses to student performance.¹⁰⁸ By allocating Wednesday afternoons to teacher development and dialogue, Horace Mann Elementary created the necessary space for professional development and student monitoring and support to occur simultaneously and reinforce one another.

At Horace Mann Elementary, the administration evaluates every student based on the aforementioned assessments and collects data on every skill gap. **These data then drive in the selection of Differentiated Instructional (DI) Groups and influence how teachers instruct and assess each group.** DI Groups are fluid, with groupings open to change after each bi-weekly examination. The DI Group instruction falls within the Tier I level of instruction at Horace Mann Elementary, with biweekly DI Group meetings serving as the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 44, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁰⁷ “School Improvement Plan: 2011-2013.” Horace Mann Elementary School. p. 50.
https://public.rcas.org/el/hm/Documents/HM_TitlePlan.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

forum for identifying students who need the support of Tier II interventions. Every student failing to meet the basic progress benchmark is eligible for Tier II interventions, and RTI officials give those requiring Tier II or III interventions individual, personal goals to monitor their progress. At this stage, an Intervention Specialist also begins to follow the student's development. Students who do not respond to Tier II interventions over a 16-18 week period then fall into Tier III, where a Special Education Pre-referral Team evaluates whether the child has a learning disability.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ "School Improvement Grant Request Form: Horace Mann Elementary." Op. cit., pp. 7-8.

APPENDIX I: DISTRICT LEVEL RTI BLUEPRINT

COMPONENT I: CONSENSUS BUILDING	
Action 1	Develop an action plan to facilitate the sharing of information and the building of district-wide consensus to support RTI.
Action 2	Provide information to internal and external stakeholders about RTI.
Action 3	Examine and define district structures to support your RTI initiative.
Action 4	Build consensus and support for internal and external stakeholders.
COMPONENT 2: INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING	
Action 1	Form a district leadership team.
Action 2	Identify the roles that district/central administration will play in implementing RTI.
Action 3	Develop and complete a district-level needs assessment.
Action 4	Discuss and make decisions about the necessary components of RTI across universal, strategic, and intensive instruction.
Action 5	Review and discuss the current performance of students in relation to universal, strategic, and intensive instruction.
Action 6	Identify an evaluation plan and data collection system.
Action 7	Develop an action plan to guide the implementation of RTI.
COMPONENT III: IMPLEMENTATION	
Action 1	Develop a multi-year (at least 3-5 years) action plan to address implementation.
Action 2	Implement the RTI professional development plan.
Action 3	Implement the evaluation and data analysis plan for RTI implementation.
Action 4	Maintain the implementation of RTI.

Source: National Association of State Directors of Special Education¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "Response to Intervention: Blueprints for Implementation – District Level" National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Op cit.

APPENDIX II: SCHOOL LEVEL RTI BLUEPRINT

COMPONENT I: CONSENSUS BUILDING	
Action 1	Provide information and coordinate with district administration.
Action 2	Provide information to school staff and others about RTI.
Action 3	Identify consensus level among staff necessary for implementing RTI.
Action 4	Determine next steps.
Action 5	Plan to support change initiative.
COMPONENT 2: INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING	
Action 1	Form a leadership team.
Action 2	Leadership team receives appropriate training and skill development to lead the RTI initiative.
Action 3	<p>The leadership team will work through 10 basic questions to develop action plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Is the core program sufficient? o If the core program is not sufficient, what led to this? o How will the needs identified in the core program be addressed? o How will the sufficiency and effectiveness of the core program be monitored over time? o Have improvements to the core program been effective? o For which students is the core instruction sufficient or not sufficient? Why or why not? o What specific supplemental and intensive instructions are needed? o How will specific supplemental and intensive instruction be delivered? o How will the effectiveness of supplemental and intensive instruction be monitored? o How will you determine which students need to move to a different level of instruction?
COMPONENT III: IMPLEMENTATION	
Action 1	Provide professional development and ongoing supports for those administering assessments and providing instruction.
Action 2	Implement logistics of assessments and periodic data analysis.
Action 3	Implement logistics of core, supplemental, and intensive instruction.
Action 4	Monitor implementation.
Action 5	Collect and summarize program evaluation data.
Action 6	Communicate regularly with school staff.
Action 7	Celebrate your successes.

Source: National Association of State Directors of Special Education¹¹¹

¹¹¹ "Response to Intervention: Blueprints for Implementation – School Level" National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Op cit.

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