



WHITEPAPER

10 ATTRIBUTES OF AN EFFECTIVE RTI PROGRAM



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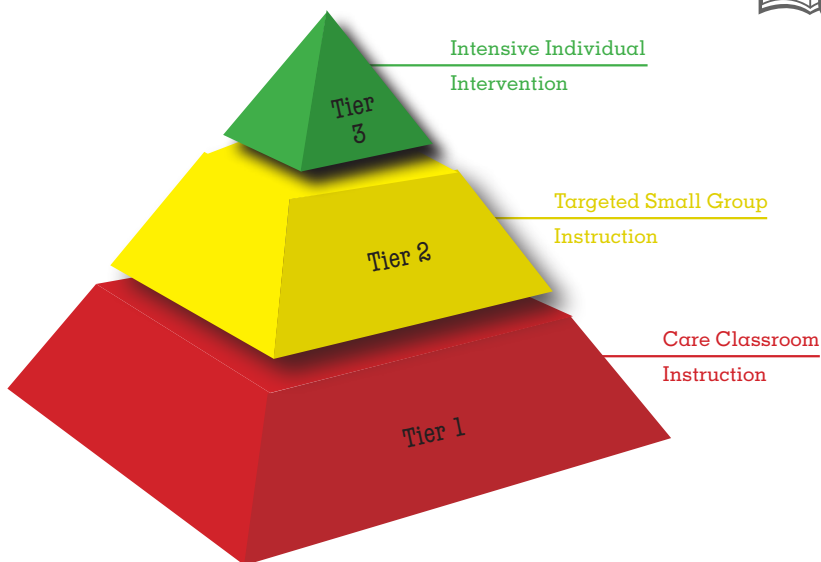
This paper is intended to help educators choose an online intervention solution from the many providers in the market for those students needing extra support in Math and English Language Arts.



The Educational Path to Success

Any strong, sustaining path is built brick-by-brick by a team of people who come together for a common goal -- in this case student achievement.

The foundation of the bricks are laid by the group of people with the highest commitment to student achievement: the school administrators, teachers, parents/guardians and students.

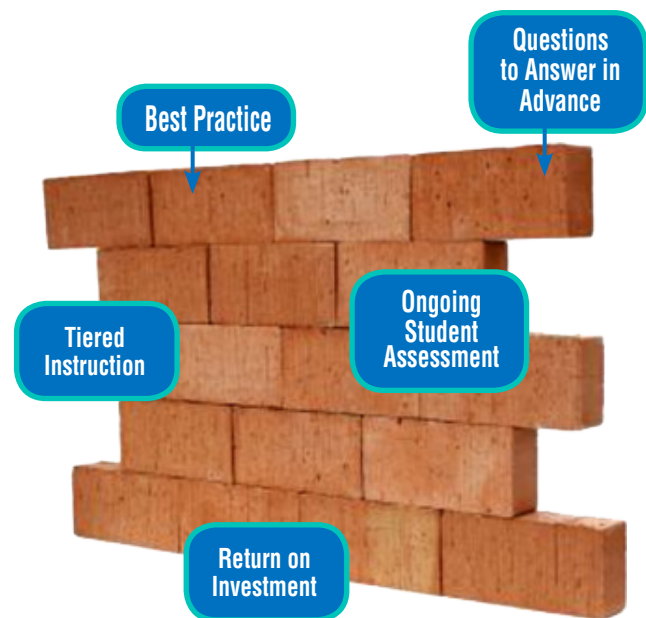


RTI: An Overview

Response to Intervention (“RTI”) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The concept is based on “prevention” rather than “reaction”. Schools take a proactive approach to student achievement rather than waiting for students to fail. For our purposes, this paper focuses on the learning aspect of RTI. Students then move between tiers according to their academic and behavioral rates of progress.

The Bricks that Build the Pathway to a strong Intervention Solution

There are five bricks that need to be laid to build the foundation of a strong pathway to RTI success. As you assess your intervention options, be sure you evaluate each of these bricks before making a decision on which option to pursue. It is worth noting that none of the bricks is “price”. Return on Investment is a far better measure. Let’s step through each of the bricks so you are doing a fair comparison of your options.



RTI Best Practices¹

There are many keys to a successful RTI intervention. These are the often overlooked implementation steps that make or break a successful RTI. Consider the following steps before you undertake any RTI solution:

Have the Proper Team at the Table:

At Tier 1 -- Because this is a classroom-wide assessment, just the teacher is involved.

At Tier 2 -- At Tier 2, the teacher and parents should be involved in the process.

At Tier 3, be sure to *include the school’s special education team* but do not allow them to lead this phase. Parents will perceive their leadership as a special education process and will create resistance.

- **Buy-In:** In order for any RTI solution to be embraced and its implementation supported, the school and greater organization must socially accept it within the schools. Be sure that there are no labels. Most administrators are taking a more active role in the implementation of RTI at their school sites. If administrators support it, teachers will accept and implement it. Conversely, if classroom leaders drive it through a grassroots effort, school leadership will take notice and support it.
- **Professional Development:** High-quality, sustained professional development should be offered

¹ RTI Implementation: Identifying the Barriers and Best Practices, Kathleen Ann Leaver, Georgia Southern University, Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, 2012

to all stakeholders involved in the RTI process. This group should be shown the RTI tool, use cases and then monitored for proper implementation. Professional development is the best way to grow and sustain RTI.

- **Implementation:** The implementation of interventions and monitoring must be guaranteed if it is to be effective and legally defensible in the unlikely event that a parent brings a lawsuit against the school district for handling their child's case improperly. The intervention plan should be a data-driven, problem-solving solution that simplifies the entire process and encourages collaboration among all key stakeholders.

Questions to Ask in Advance of Choosing an Intervention

To assist in the selection of an intervention program, it is important to analyze the problem's context and function as it relates to promoting learning. Here are several questions that you should work through with your team, whether you are creating a plan for an individual student, a small group or an entire grade.

1. What are the conditions within which the student is learning? Where, when, with whom and during what activities is the student struggling?
2. What factors can we change (e.g. instructional strategies or curriculum materials) to improve learning?
3. Is the problem a skill (e.g. "can't do") or a behavior (e.g. "won't do")?
4. What are the specific, measurable goals that we want to achieve?

There is a direct link between these questions and your selection of a solution.

Tiered Instruction²

Though there is no single, thoroughly researched and widely practiced model of the RTI process, there is a widely accepted model. The model is generally defined as a three-tier (or three step) model of school supports that uses research-based academic and/or behavioral interventions. The Three-Tier Model is:



² RTI Action Network, A Program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities.6/18/2017

Tier 1: High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions

During the Tier 1 phase, all students receive high-quality, scientifically-based instruction provided by qualified personnel to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. Periodic screenings are conducted to establish an academic and behavioral baseline. Using this information, the school leaders can identify struggling learners who need additional support. Those students who are identified as being “at-risk” receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. The length of time for this step varies, but it generally should not exceed 8 weeks. Students not showing adequate progress are moved to Tier 2.

Tier 2: Targeted Interventions

Students not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in Tier 1 are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress. These services and interventions are provided in small-group settings outside of the classroom. This Tier typically lasts no more than a grading period. Students who continue to show difficulty at this level of intervention are then moved on to Tier 3 for more intensive interventions.

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation

At this level, students receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the students’ learning deficiencies. This is the final step before struggling students are referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for eligibility for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).



On-Going Student Assessment

In order to ensure that learning is accelerated and fewer students are at risk, on-going student assessment is mandatory. We can’t predict whether a chosen plan of action will work for all students or if adjustments need to be made to accommodate certain learners. This is why on-going progress monitoring is essential and necessary.

Let’s use the healthcare industry as an analogy for on-going student assessment. In caring for our kids, we use the term “well checks” for screening and monitoring overall health or certain conditions. For children, this includes annual exams where height and weight are measured. These are then plotted on a typical growth chart and assessed as “normal” or “abnormal”. Measuring student achievement follows the same pattern.

Progress toward achieving important educational outcomes describes the growth rates of students as they are learning reading, writing, and math. Progress monitoring should be used as regularly and as frequently as necessary throughout the school year both to identify students at risk for academic problems and to evaluate the impact of changing a program on a student's rate of academic growth.

Data is a critical component of on-going student assessment. When decision making is based on data rather than subjective or anecdotal evidence, the accuracy increases exponentially. Data-driven decisions must be used to plan, implement, manage and evaluate both core instruction and interventions.



Return on Investment³

In the United States, total spending on students with disabilities surpasses \$80 billion annually and hovers around 20% of total spending on K-12 public education, according to the Center for Special Education Finance.⁴ As instructional leaders are tasked with spending their allocated funding responsibly, education leaders are looking for a return on any investment. The idea of measuring return on investment in education can be uncomfortable but it is necessary.



According to “The Resourceful School”⁵:

Academic return on investment (ROI) seeks to maximize achievement for the greatest number of students, given available resources. Many superintendents and school boards apply this concept intuitively. There is great benefit, however, in doing it explicitly. The formula for academic ROI is straightforward:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{(\text{learning increase}) \times (\# \text{ of students helped})}{\$ \text{ spent}}$$

Instead of assuming that all current spending is equally valuable, there are several questions that should be asked in evaluating an educational investment. These include:

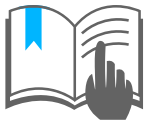
- How much learning is taking place?
- How many students are being helped?
- What the cost is per student served.

Using the formula above and asking the right questions, can help justify spending on an RTI solution.

³ December 2011/January 2012 | Volume 69 | Number 4 The Resourceful School Pages 34-39
Academic ROI: What Does the Most Good? Nathan Levenson

⁴ National Center for Special Education Research. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/>

⁵ December 2011/January 2012 | Volume 69 | Number 4
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Objectively Evaluating & Selecting RTI Interventions

There are dozens of RTI solutions available to educators. Evaluating them with objectivity and uniformity is often difficult. The following 10 factors are the minimum that any RTI solution should offer in terms of improving academic performance.

1. Delivery Method

Schools are becoming increasingly technology enabled. While many schools still use paper-based RTI resources, moving toward on-line resources benefits both teachers and students. Just over 54% of schools have internet and 60% of schools have laptops available to their students⁶. As the world becomes more tech-enabled, web-based RTI solutions become more valuable. As you consider your options, determine whether paper-based resources or an online solution makes the most sense.

2. Common Core/State Standards Alignment

Standards-based instruction helps guide the planning, implementation, and assessment of student learning. The use of standards ensures that teaching practices deliberately focus on agreed upon learning targets. Using an RTI solution that is clearly aligned to standards based instruction ensures that students meet the demands targeted.

3. Customizable Diagnostic (Assessment) Tool

Diagnostic assessment is a form of pre-assessment that allows a teacher to determine students' individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction. It is primarily used to diagnose student difficulties and to guide lesson and curriculum planning. Any RTI solution MUST include a diagnostic tool or the assessment process becomes unnecessarily burdensome. Having the ability to develop customizable assessments is a bonus to any program.

4. Platform on Which the RTI Solution is Built

Whether an RTI solution is game-based or skills-focused, it needs to be developed by a team of people that have a foundation in education and understand the components of a successful RTI solution. The material needs to be drawn from a database of standards-aligned material for maximum impact.

⁶ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/technology-computers-in-classroom-statistics/>

5. Practice Tests that Mirror State Assessment

Every state is making an effort to ensure that all students in public schools in America acquire the skills and knowledge they need in order to be prepared to achieve success at college or in the workforce. Many states still have their own set of educational requirements. In either case, it is critical that any RTI solution mirrors state standards so that it is easy to judge how effectively a school is teaching its students and how those students are learning.

6. Technology-Enhanced Learning Tools

The use of technology makes ongoing data collection, data consumption, and data-based decision making a more plausible proposition, and it can keep these important aspects of RTI from monopolizing teacher time. Technology-enabled questions that mirror state testing is also important in preparing students for the increasingly common computer-based state testing. That said, technology-enhanced assessments, reporting and monitoring would be the ideal means of supporting RTI implementation.

7. Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a key part of the RTI process. As part of the implementation process, a teacher must assess skills weekly or every other week and keep notes about how a child is doing. Any RTI solution must include a system for closely monitoring a student's progress so that the school knows whether a specific intervention or teaching method is working or not.

8. Reporting

In addition to progress monitoring, any RTI solution should enable a teacher to use data to create a learning profile of his/her student. It should answer critical questions that shed light on whether a student is struggling with a topic, question type or skill.

9. Collaboration Platform

During the implementation process, all key stakeholders must be involved. Any RTI solution must include a vehicle for parents/guardians, students and teachers to work together. There should be a means of communication and collaboration.

10. Pricing Model

In consideration of the prior ROI discussion, it is important to ensure that the pricing model for the RTI solution under consideration demonstrates a measurable return on investment.

As you continue on your journey to find an ideal RTI solution in ELA and/or math, you may find the following evaluation worksheet helpful in the evaluation process.

**Download the RTI Vendor
Evaluation Sheet**

About Lumos Learning

Lumos Learning offers an RTI solution that is specifically designed to improve student achievement on the state standardized tests. It is a leading solution that offers every brick to support the successful implementation of a comprehensive intervention program. Lumos Learning is committed to supporting 1 billion learning interactions on StepUp through its innovative tools. Using the Lumos Study Programs, educators and parents can reinforce classroom learning to boost student achievement in reading and math.

For a no-cost demonstration of our online StepUp program or a sample of our print-based resource, reach out to us by email (support@lumoslearning.com) or by phone (888-309-8227).

Visit www.lumoslearning.com to learn more about our solutions.

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