RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools

Implementing Response to Intervention: An Introduction for CAST Center Consultants

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Frequently Asked Questions About…Response to Intervention

1. What is Response to Intervention (RTI)? RTI is a school-wide model of student support. While all students can benefit from the RTI model, a primary focus is students in general-education classrooms who are struggling with academic and/or behavior problems. The foundation of RTI in any school is strong core instruction happening in all classrooms. The school also uses screening data such as brief academic assessments, disciplinary office referrals, attendance, and grades to identify students who need additional intervention assistance. The school then designs individualized intervention plans for those at-risk students to meet their learning needs. All interventions used under RTI should be 'evidence-based': that is, they have been shown through rigorous research to be effective in school settings. When the school puts students on intervention plans, the school collects baseline data to estimate the student's current performance in the area(s) of academic or behavioral difficulty and sets goals for improvement. During the intervention, the student is monitored periodically so that the school can judge in a short amount of time (e.g., 6-8 instructional weeks) whether a particular intervention plan is effective.

2. What type of student is RTI designed to help? The RTI model benefits all students. The first area of focus for RTI is on high-quality universal instruction. In a typical school, however, it is estimated that about 20 percent of the general-education student population may not be successful even when receiving high-quality classroom instruction. These 'difficult-to-teach' students require more specialized intervention plans to supplement their core instruction. Schools can also see benefits in applying the standards of the RTI model to special education students. Schools should expect, for example, that the IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) of special needs students will contain evidence-based instructional and behavior management strategies, identify student baseline and performance goal levels, and require the collection of progress-monitoring data to determine if those students are in fact reaching their performance goals.

3. How does RTI organize a school's intervention services? RTI intervention services are set up in a multi-tier system, with intervention plans becoming increasingly intensive as students face a higher risk of school failure. The first tier of RTI support, Tier 1, is universal instruction/intervention and is available to all students. Tier 1 is the responsibility of the classroom teacher, who delivers strong core instruction and also employs a range of feasible, practical strategies to provide additional academic or behavioral support for struggling students. It should be noted that a classroom Tier 1 intervention plan continues as a required foundation even for those students who may eventually go on to receive more intensive intervention assistance at Tiers 2 and 3.

   In a typical school, up to 20 percent of students will need additional interventions to address academic delays beyond what is available in the classroom. Most of these students would receive supplemental Tier 2 intervention services. When setting up Tier 2 services, a school will typically adopt what is referred to as the 'standard treatment protocol' approach. That is, the school identifies common areas of student concern (e.g., deficits in general academic vocabulary, limited reading comprehension 'fix up' skills) and purchase or create an evidence-based 'standard treatment' program to target these student academic deficits. Tier 2 services are most often delivered in small groups (capped at 6-7 students) or via computer-based learning.

   Approximately 5 percent of general-education students in a typical school receive Tier 3 intervention support in a given year. The profile of a Tier 3 student is one who has not responded to lesser interventions and who is facing a potentially negative, high-stakes outcome such as course failure if that student cannot significantly improve his or her academic or behavioral performance. Most schools adopt a 'problem solving protocol' when planning

intensive, Tier 3 interventions: The school establishes an RTI Problem-Solving Team that meets with the referring teacher(s) and efficiently uses the intervention resources of the building to develop a customized intervention plan that matches the unique needs of the student.

4. What role do assessment and data collection play in the RTI process? Student assessment is a necessary part of RTI, as data allows the school to locate students who need intervention support and to judge in 'real time' whether specific interventions are actually helping those students. At Tier 1, the teacher who has a student on classroom intervention collects information from the instructional environment to show whether the student is benefiting from that intervention plan. Because teachers typically intervene proactively at Tier 1 to address emerging student deficits before they become major, the stakes are lower. Therefore, the kinds of data collected by teachers to document their classroom interventions can be varied and may not be as time-intensive or rigorous as data collection at the higher-stakes Tiers 2 and 3. At Tier 1, for example, a teacher may document a student's classroom writing intervention through work samples of student writing assignments, grades, occasional scoring of writing assignments using a rubric, and perhaps a weekly administration of a Curriculum-Based Measurement writing probe.

   RTI schools also adopt a proactive approach to identifying struggling learners by selecting several methods to screen the entire student population at several points per year. Schools may use a mix of data sources in their screenings, including brief, timed academic measures (e.g., Curriculum-Based Measures such as oral reading fluency probes and Maze Reading Comprehension passages); disciplinary office referrals; grades; attendance; recent state test results; etc. Individuals who are flagged in these universal screenings as needing additional intervention support are placed in supplemental (Tier 2 or 3) intervention services.

   Academic measures selected to monitor the progress of students at Tiers 2 and 3 should possess 'technical adequacy': that is, they should be valid, reliable, have multiple alternate forms to allow repeated administration, and be sensitive to short-term student academic gains. Examples of CBMs that can be useful for assessing academic skills include phonemic awareness, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension (Maze passage), math computation, and writing probes. Students who receive Tier 2 'standard treatment protocol' interventions should have their progress monitored at least 1-2 times per month. Students on high-stakes Tier 3 interventions overseen by the RTI Problem-Solving Team should be assessed at least weekly.

5. What is the role of the classroom teacher in the RTI model? The classroom teacher is responsible under RTI for providing high-quality core instruction to effectively reach the widest possible range of learners. Additionally, the teacher notes any struggling students who need additional 'differentiated' instructional or behavioral support and provides that support in the form of a Tier 1 (classroom) intervention plan. Of course, the teacher should document Tier 1 interventions. The teacher should also be prepared to refer any students who do not respond sufficiently to classroom Tier 1 interventions for higher levels of RTI support--while continuing to use RTI classroom strategies with those students. The classroom teacher should also contact parents of struggling students to share concerns about these students and to encourage open, positive and regular communication between school and home.

6. What is the parent's role in the RTI model? The school is responsible for finding ways for struggling students to be successful—whether or not parents choose to actively participate in their children's educational program. Nonetheless, there is wide agreement that parents play a crucial role in guiding and motivating their children toward academic success. For example, parents can serve as influential role models for work and study skills, set up and supervise homework sessions, stay in close communication with the school about their child's academic performance and behaviors, and dispense home privileges contingent on the effort that their child makes in school. There is no question that the protective factors offered by parents who are positively involved in their children's schooling directly promote academic success and support the mission of RTI. Schools must, however, also recognize that, for a variety of reasons, not all parents find it easy to be involved in their child's education. Schools can most fully engage the power of parent participation by expecting that teachers will contact parents when a student begins to experience difficulties in school, inviting parents to attend RTI Problem-Solving Team meetings, taking care that staff adopt respectful language and tone when speaking with parents about their children, and treating parents at all times as respected colleagues in the RTI process.

7. How can RTI information assist schools in identifying students who need special education services? When a student is being considered for possible special education services, the school must first answer a fundamental question: Are that student's academic problems primarily a result of educational factors such as a mismatch between student and instruction--or do they stem instead from a chronic, within-child condition such as a learning disability? The RTI model provides evidence that helps schools to rule out instructional explanations for underperformance by clearly defining a student's problems, matching those problems to evidence-based interventions, verifying that all interventions are fully carried out as designed, and collecting formative assessment data to judge whether the student has made adequate progress in moving from baseline to goal levels. In other words, when a general-education student is ultimately found to be a 'non-responder' to appropriate evidence-based interventions, that failure to respond can be viewed as one diagnostic marker serving as partial evidence for a possible underlying learning disability or other special education condition.

8. Why must schools use 'evidence-based' interventions in RTI? Schools have limited resources and time to put effective interventions in place for struggling students. That is simply a reality of our public education system. Therefore, the RTI model requires that schools be able to justify the intervention strategies that they select by showing that they are 'evidence-based—i.e., that there is sufficient research to support these strategies. Most researchers agree that evidence-based interventions are those whose effectiveness has been demonstrated through well-crafted studies that use rigorous research methodologies. Ideally, too, these studies should have been published in reputable research journals that have a blind peer-review process to ensure that only studies of the highest quality are published.

9. Is RTI required by law? RTI was first introduced to public schools across the nation with the reauthorization by Congress in 2004 of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA 2004). This federal legislation encourages the spread of RTI in public education by directing states to allow any of their schools to adopt an RTI model if they so choose and by explicitly preventing states from mandating the continuing use of a test score discrepancy formula in diagnosing learning disabilities. However, IDEIA 2004 also lets states decide whether to *require* that their schools adopt RTI and –if so—what the particulars of each state's RTI model might look like. At present, then, the U.S. Department of Education strongly supports schools' efforts to restructure their student support according to RTI guidelines. However, schools should contact their state education departments for guidance in determining whether RTI is mandated statewide and for specifics about what RTI model(s) their state supports.

How To: Deliver Direct Instruction in General-Education Classrooms

When teachers must present challenging academic material to struggling learners, they can make that material more accessible and promote faster learning by building assistance directly into instruction. Researchers use several terms to refer to this increased level of student instructional support: direct instruction, explicit instruction, supported instruction (Rosenshine, 2008).

The checklist below summarizes the essential elements of a direct-instruction approach. When preparing lesson plans, instructors can use this resource as a 'pre-flight' checklist to make sure that their lessons reach the widest range of diverse learners.

1. Increase Access to Instruction

Instructional Element	Notes
☐ Instructional Match. Lesson content is appropriately matched to students' abilities (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
☐ Content Review at Lesson Start. The lesson opens with a brief review of concepts or material that have previously been presented. (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Preview of Lesson Goal(s). At the start of instruction, the goals of the current day's lesson are shared (Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Chunking of New Material. The teacher breaks new material into small, manageable increments, 'chunks', or steps (Rosenshine, 2008).	

2. Provided 'Scaffolding' Support

Instructional Element	Notes
☐ Detailed Explanations & Instructions. throughout the lesson, the teacher provides adequate explanations and detailed instructions for all concepts and materials being taught (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
☐ Think-Alouds/Talk-Alouds. When presenting cognitive strategies that cannot be observed directly, the teacher describes those strategies for students. Verbal explanations include 'talk-alouds' (e.g., the teacher describes and explains each step of a cognitive strategy) and 'think-alouds' (e.g., the teacher applies a cognitive strategy to a particular problem or task and verbalizes the steps in applying the strategy) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Work Models. The teacher makes exemplars of academic work (e.g., essays, completed math word problems) available to students for use as models (Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Active Engagement. The teacher ensures that the lesson engages the student in 'active accurate responding' (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005) often enough to capture student attention and to optimize learning.	

☐ Collaborative Assignments. Students have frequent opportunities to work collaboratively--in pairs or groups. (Baker, Gersten, & Lee, 2002; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
☐ Checks for Understanding. The instructor regularly checks for student understanding by posing frequent questions to the group (Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Group Responding. The teacher ensures full class participation and boosts levels of student attention by having all students respond in various ways (e.g., choral responding, response cards, white boards) to instructor questions (Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ High Rate of Student Success. The teacher verifies that students are experiencing at least 80% success in the lesson content to shape their learning in the desired direction and to maintain student motivation and engagement (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
☐ Brisk Rate of Instruction. The lesson moves at a brisk rate--sufficient to hold student attention (Carnine,1976; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).	
☐ Fix-Up Strategies. Students are taught fix-up strategies (Rosenshine, 2008) for use during independent work (e.g., for defining unknown words in reading assignments, for solving challenging math word problems).	

3. Give Timely Performance Feedback	
Instructional Element	Notes
☐ Regular Feedback. The teacher provides timely and regular performance feedback and corrections throughout the lesson as needed to guide student learning (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice).	
☐ Step-by-Step Checklists. For multi-step cognitive strategies, the teacher creates checklists for students to use to self-monitor performance (Rosenshine, 2008).	

4. Provide Opportunities for Review & Practice	
Instructional Element	Notes
☐ Spacing of Practice Throughout Lesson. The lesson includes practice activities spaced throughout the lesson. (e.g., through teacher demonstration; then group practice with teacher supervision and feedback; then independent, individual student practice) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice).	
☐ Guided Practice. When teaching challenging material, the teacher provides immediate corrective feedback to each student response. When the instructor anticipates the possibility of an incorrect response, that teacher forestalls student error through use of cues, prompts, or hints. The teacher also tracks student responding and ensures sufficient success during supervised lessons before having students practice the new skills or knowledge independently (Burns,	

VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).	
☐ Support for Independent Practice. The teacher ensures that students have adequate support (e.g., clear and explicit instructions; teacher monitoring) to be successful during independent seatwork practice activities (Rosenshine, 2008).	
☐ Distributed Practice. The teacher reviews previously taught content one or more times over a period of several weeks or months (Pashler et al., 2007; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1995).	

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How To: Use the Instructional Hierarchy to Identify Effective Teaching and Intervention Targets

Teachers recognize that learning is a continual process of growth and improvement. The student who grapples with the rudiments of a skill such as reading appears very different from the more advanced student who is a proficient and self-motivated reader. Intuitively, then, educators understand that students advance through predictable stages of learning as they move from novice to expert in a particular skill.

The Common Core Standards, too, acknowledge advancing levels of learning, as can be seen in their wording. For example, a 6th-grade Common Core Standard for Mathematics on the Number System (CCSM.6.NS.2) states that the student will "fluently divide multi-digit numbers using the standard algorithm." (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices et al., 2010; p. 42). This standard assumes that the successful student is both (1) accurate and (2) proficient (i.e., fluent) in multi-digit division--and implies as well that the student (3) will retain the skill over time, (4) will have the endurance to complete grade-appropriate tasks that include the skill, and (5) can flexibly apply or generalize the skill to those situations and settings in which multi-digit division will be useful.

The Instructional Hierarchy-IH (Haring et al., 1978) is a helpful framework to analyze stages of student learning. The Instructional Hierarchy breaks learning process into several levels, shifting from skill acquisition through skill mastery toward full integration of the skill into the student's academic repertoire. As presented here, the Instructional Hierarchy consists of 5 levels (Haring et al., 1978; Martens & Witt, 2004): Acquisition, fluency, retention, endurance, and generalization. Although initially formulated several decades ago, the Instructional Hierarchy is widely used as a model of learning in contemporary research into effective instruction and academic intervention (e.g., Ardoin & Daly, 2007).

By linking a particular student's target skill to the corresponding IH learning stage, the teacher can gain insight into what instructional supports and strategies will help that student to attain academic success. This linkage of learner to learning stage increases both teacher confidence and the probability for a positive student outcome. The table below (adapted from Haring et al., 1978 and Martens & Witt, 2004) gives instructors a brief description of each learning stage in the IH, along with suggested instructional strategies and a sample intervention idea:

1. Acquisition

Goal. At the beginning of the acquisition stage, the student has just begun to acquire the target skill. The objective is for the student to learn how to complete the skill accurately and repeatedly--without requiring the help of another.

Instructional Strategies. When just beginning a new skill, the student learns effectively through learning trials, in which the teacher: (1) *models* how to perform the skill, (2) *prompts* the student to perform the skill; and (3) *provides immediate performance feedback* to shape the student's learning in the desired direction. The teacher can maintain student motivation by providing frequent 'labeled praise' (that is, praise that specifically describes the student's positive academic behaviors and effort) and encouragement. As the student becomes accurate and more independent in the skill, the teacher can gradually fade prompting support.

Sample Intervention Idea. *Cover-copy-compare* is a student-delivered intervention that promotes acquisition of math-facts or spelling words (Skinner, McLaughlin, & Logan, 1997). The student is given a blank index card and a worksheet with spelling words or math-facts (with answers) appearing in the left column. One at a time, the student studies each original model (spelling word or math fact), covers the model with index card, from memory copies the model (spelling word or math-fact equation and answer)

into the right column of the worksheet, then uncovers the model to confirm that the student work is correct. NOTE: This intervention is most appropriate for use as the student has acquired some accuracy and independence in the target skill.

2. Fluency

Goal. The student who advances into the fluency stage can complete the target skill with accuracy but works relatively slowly. The objective is for the student to maintain accuracy while increasing speed of responding (fluency).

Instructional Strategies. The student who has acquired the skill but must become more proficient benefits from (1) brief, frequent opportunities to practice the skill coupled with (2) instructional feedback about increasing speed of performance (Martens & Witt, 2004). To facilitate fluency-building, the teacher structures group learning activities to give the student plenty of opportunities for active (observable) responding. The student is also given multiple opportunities for drill (direct repetition of the target skill) and practice (combining the target skill with other skills to solve problems or accomplish tasks). The student receives feedback on the fluency and accuracy of the academic performance, as well as praise and encouragement tied to increased fluency.

Sample Intervention Idea. An example of a group strategy to promote fluency in math-facts is *explicit time drill* (Rhymer et al., 2002). The teacher hands out a math-fact worksheet. Students are told that they will have 3 minutes to work on problems on the sheet. The teacher starts the stop watch and tells the students to start work. At the end of the first minute in the 3-minute span, the teacher 'calls time', stops the stopwatch, and tells the students to underline the last number written and to put their pencils in the air. Then students are told to resume work and the teacher restarts the stopwatch. This process is repeated at the end of minutes 2 and 3. At the conclusion of the 3 minutes, the teacher collects the student worksheets.

3. Retention

Goal. At the start of the retention stage, the student is reasonably fluent but is at risk of losing proficiency in the target skill through lapses in use. At this point, the objective is to 'overlearn' the skill to insure its retention even after long periods of disuse.

Instructional Strategies. Frequent opportunities for practice can be an effective method to entrench a skill and help the student to retain it over time (Martens & Witt, 2004). The teacher can schedule numerous practice episodes within a short time ('massed review') to promote initial fluency and then reinforce longer-term retention of the skill by scheduling additional periodic review ('distributed review') across longer spans of several weeks or even months (Pashler et al., 2007).

Sample Intervention Idea. An illustration of an intervention to promote retention is *repeated reading* (Lo, Cooke, & Starling, 2011). This intervention targets reading fluency: The student is given a passage and first 'rehearses' that passage by following along silently as the tutor reads it aloud. Then the student reads the same passage aloud several times in a row, with the tutor giving performance feedback after each re-reading. If a teacher uses a fluency-building strategy such as repeated reading but sets an ambitious outcome goal that is *above* the minimum benchmark for success, the resulting 'overlearning' can support long-term retention of the skill. For example, a 4th-grade teacher uses repeated reading with a student during a mid-year intervention and tracks the student's reading fluency using timed 1-minute curriculum-based measurement oral reading fluency passages. Benchmark norms (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005) suggest that the student will cross over into the 'low-risk' range for reading fluency if he can read at least 87 words

per minute according to the mid-year benchmark norms for grade 4. The teacher decides instead to overshoot, setting the outcome goal to a higher 95 words per minute ('overlearning') to give the student an additional margin of reading fluency to promote long-term skil retention.

4. Endurance

Goal. At the onset of the endurance stage, the student has become fluent in the target skill but will engage in it only reluctantly or for brief periods. The goal is to have the student persist in the skill for the longer intervals of time required in the classroom setting or expected for the student's age group. (Martens & Witt, 2004)

Instructional Strategies. Several instructional ideas can promote increased student endurance. In structuring lessons or independent work, for example, the teacher can gradually lengthen the period of time that the student spends in skills practice or use. The student can also be enlisted to self-monitor active engagement in skill-building activities--setting daily, increasingly ambitious work goals and then tracking whether he or she successfully reaches those goals. NOTE: If a student appears to lack 'endurance', the teacher should also verify that the fundamentals of good instruction are in place: for example, that the student can do the assigned work (instructional match), adequately understands directions, is receiving timely performance feedback, etc.

Sample Intervention Idea. An idea to increase student endurance provides breaks between gradually lengthening work intervals (*'fixed-time escape'*: adapted from Waller & Higbee, 2010). This strategy can be used with groups or individual students. The teacher first selects a target activity for endurance-building (e.g., independent reading). The teacher then sets the length of work periods by estimating the typical length of time that the student or group will currently engage in the activity (e.g., 5 minutes) before becoming off-task or disruptive. The teacher also decides on a length for brief 'escape' breaks (e.g., 2 minutes)--times when students can stop work and instead take part in preferred activities.

At the start of the intervention, the teacher directs the student or group to begin the target work activity. At the end of the work interval (e.g., 5 minutes), the teacher announces that the student or group can take a short break (e.g., 2 minutes). When that break is over, students are directed to again begin work. This sequence (work interval, escape interval) repeats until the scheduled work period is over. As students are able successfully to remain engaged during work periods, the teacher can gradually extend the length of these work periods by small increments, while reducing and then fading escape breaks, until work periods reach the desired length.

5. Generalization

Goal. At the beginning of the generalization stage, the student is accurate and fluent in using the target skill but does not always employ the skill where or when needed. The goal of this phase is to motivate the student to apply the skill in the widest possible range of appropriate settings and situations.

Instructional Strategies. The teacher can promote generalization of skills by first identifying the types of situations in which the student should apply the target skill and then programming instructional tasks that replicate or mimic these situations. So the teacher may create lessons in which students can generalize the target skills by interacting with a range of people, working with varied materials, and/or visiting different settings. The teacher can also use explicit prompts to remind students to apply skills in specific situations.

Sample Intervention Idea. For a student who does not always generalize the skill of carefully checking

math assignments before turning them in, the teacher can work with that student to create a math *self-correction checklist* (Uberti, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2004). Teacher and student meet to create a checklist of that student's most common sources of errors on math assignments. The student is then expected to use the checklist to review math work before submitting to the teacher. This intervention strategy can be adopted to other disciplines (e.g., writing assignments) as well. And completed checklists can be collected with assignments to verify student use.

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How To: Define Academic Problems: The First Step in Effective Intervention Planning

Students who struggle with academic deficits do not do so in isolation. Their difficulties are played out in the larger context of the school environment and curriculum—and represent a 'mismatch' between the characteristics of the student and the instructional demands of the classroom (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). It may surprise educators to learn that the problem-identification step is the most critical for matching the student to an effective intervention (Bergan, 1995). Problem identification statements should be defined in clear and specific terms sufficient to pass 'the stranger test' (Howell, Hosp, & Kurns, 2008). That is, the student problem can be judged as adequately defined if a person with no background knowledge of the case and equipped only with the problem-identification statement can observe the student in the academic setting and know with confidence when the problem behavior is displayed and when it is not.

Here are recommendations for increasing teacher capacity to frame student skills in relation to curriculum requirements, describe student academic problems in specific terms, and generate a hypothesis about why the problem is occurring.

1. Know the Common Core. Academic abilities can best be described in terms of the specific curriculum skills or knowledge that students are required to demonstrate. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics are an excellent starting point. Teachers should have a firm grasp of the Common Core standards for ELA and Math at their instructional grade level. They should also know those standards extending to at least two grades below the current grade to allow them to better match students who are off-level academically to appropriate intervention strategies.

2. Describe the academic problem in specific, skill-based terms with a meaningful instructional context (Batsche et al., 2008; Upah, 2008). Write a clear, brief description of the academic skill or performance deficit that focuses on a specific skill or performance area. Include information about the conditions under which the academic problem is observed and typical or expected level of performance.

    - *Conditions*. Describe the environmental conditions or task demands in place when the academic problem is observed.
    - *Problem Description*. Describe the actual observable academic behavior with which the student has difficulty. If available, include specifics about student performance, such as rate of work, accuracy, or other relevant quantitative information.
    - *Typical or Expected Level of Performance*. Provide a typical or expected performance criterion for this skill or behavior. Typical or expected academic performance can be calculated using a variety of sources,

Academic Problems: Sample Definitions		
Environmental Conditions or Task Demands	Problem Description	Typical or Expected Level of Performance
When completing a beginning-level algebra word problem…	…Ann is unable to translate that word problem into an equation with variables…	…while most peers in her class have mastered this skill.
During social studies large-group instruction…	…Franklin attends to instruction an average of 45% of the time…	… while peers in the same room attend to instruction an average of 85% of the time.
For science homework…	… Tye turns in assignments an	… while the classroom median

	average of 50% of the time…	rate of homework turned in is 90%.
On weekly 30-minute in-class writing assignments…	… Angela produces compositions that average 145 words…	…while a sampling of peer compositions shows that the typical student writes an average of 254 words.

3. Develop a hypothesis statement to explain the academic skill or performance problem. The hypothesis states the assumed reason(s) or cause(s) for the student's academic problems. Once it has been developed, the hypothesis statement acts as a compass needle, pointing toward interventions that most logically address the student academic problems. Listed below are common reasons for academic problems. Note that more than one hypothesis may apply to a particular student (e.g., a student may have both a skill deficit and a motivation deficit).

Academic Problems: Possible Hypotheses & Recommendations	
Hypothesis	Recommendation
• *Skill Deficit.* The student has not yet acquired the skill.	Provide direct, explicit instruction to acquire the skill. Reinforce the student for effort and accuracy.
• *Fluency Deficit.* The student has acquired the basic skill but is not yet proficient.	Provide opportunities for the student to practice the skill and give timely performance feedback. Reinforce the student for fluency as well as accuracy.
• *Retention Deficit.* The student can acquire the skill but has difficulty retaining it over an extended period.	Give the student frequent opportunities for practice to entrench a skill and help the student to retain it over time. Begin by scheduling more numerous practice episodes within a short time ('massed review') to promote initial fluency and then strengthen longer-term skill retention by scheduling additional periodic review ('distributed review') across longer spans of several weeks or more.
• *Endurance.* The student can do the skill but engages in it only for brief periods.	Consider these ideas to boost endurance: • In structuring lessons or independent work, gradually lengthen the period of time that the student spends in skills practice or use. • Have the student self-monitor active engagement in skill-building activities--setting daily, increasingly ambitious work goals and then tracking whether he or she successfully reaches those goals.
• *Generalization Deficit.* The student possesses the basic skill but fails to use it across appropriate situations or settings.	Train the student to identify the relevant characteristics of situations or settings when the skill should be used. Provide incentives for the student to use the skill in the appropriate settings.
• *Motivation (Performance) Deficit.* The student is capable of performing the skill and can identify when use of the skill is appropriate—but nonetheless is not motivated to use the skill.	Use various strategies to engage the student in the skill (e.g., select high-interest learning activities; offer incentives to the student for successful use of the skill, etc.).

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Academic Problems: Sample Definitions		
Environmental Conditions or Task Demands	Problem Description	Typical or Expected Level of Performance

How To: Define Intervention-Related Terms: Core Instruction, Intervention, Instructional Adjustment, Modification

Educators who serve as interventionists should be able to define and distinguish among the terms *core instruction*, *intervention*, *instructional adjustment*, and *modification*. (In particular, interventionists should avoid using modifications as part of an intervention plan to support a general education student in core instruction--as they can be predicted to undermine the student's academic performance.) Here are definitions for these key terms. (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999; Wright, 2007).

Intervention-Related Terms & Definitions

- Core Instruction. Those instructional strategies that are used routinely with all students in a general-education setting are considered 'core instruction'. High-quality instruction is essential and forms the foundation of classroom academic support. NOTE: While it is important to verify that a struggling student receives good core instructional practices, those routine practices do not 'count' as individual student interventions.

- Intervention. An academic *intervention* is a strategy used to teach a new skill, build fluency in a skill, or encourage a child to apply an existing skill to new situations or settings. An intervention can be thought of as "a set of actions that, when taken, have demonstrated ability to change a fixed educational trajectory" (Methe & Riley-Tillman, 2008; p. 37). As an example of an academic intervention, the teacher may select question generation (Davey & McBride,1986.; Rosenshine, Meister & Chapman, 1996), a strategy in which the student is taught to locate or generate main idea sentences for each paragraph in a passage and record those 'gist' sentences for later review.

- Instructional Adjustment (Accommodation). An *instructional adjustment* (also known as an 'accommodation') is intended to help the student to fully access and participate in the general-education curriculum without changing the instructional content and without reducing the student's rate of learning (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005). An instructional adjustment is intended to remove barriers to learning while still expecting that students will master the same instructional content as their typical peers. An instructional adjustment for students who are slow readers, for example, may include having them supplement their silent reading of a novel by listening to the book on tape. An instructional adjustment for unmotivated students may include breaking larger assignments into smaller 'chunks' and providing students with performance feedback and praise for each completed 'chunk' of assigned work (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005).

- Modification. A modification changes the expectations of what a student is expected to know or do—typically by lowering the academic standards against which the student is to be evaluated. Examples of modifications are giving a student five math computation problems for practice instead of the 20 problems assigned to the rest of the class or letting the student consult course notes during a test when peers are not permitted to do so. Instructional modifications are essential elements on the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans of many students with special needs. Modifications are generally not included on a general-education student's classroom intervention plan, however, because the assumption is that the student can be successful in the curriculum with appropriate interventions and instructional adjustments alone. In fact, modifying the work of struggling general education students is likely to have a negative effect that works *against* the goals of intervention. Reducing academic expectations will result in these students falling further behind rather than closing the performance gap with peers

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How To: Use Accommodations With General-Education Students: Teacher Guidelines

Classrooms in most schools look pretty much alike, with students sitting at rows of desks attending (more or less) to teacher instruction. But a teacher facing any class knows that behind that group of attentive student faces lies a kaleidoscope of differences in academic, social, self-management, and language skills. For example, recent national test results indicate that well over half of elementary and middle-school students have not yet attained proficiency in mathematics (NAEP, 20011a) or reading (NAEP 2011b). Furthermore, 1 in 10 students now attending American schools is an English Language Learner (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012) who must grapple with the complexities of language acquisition in addition to the demands of academic coursework.

Teachers can increase the chances for academic success by weaving into their instructional routine an appropriate array of classwide curricular accommodations made available to any general-education student who needs them (Kern, Bambara, & Fogt, 2002). However, teachers also know that they must strike an appropriate balance: while accommodations have the potential to help struggling learners to more fully engage in demanding academics, they should not compromise learning by holding a general-education student who accesses them to a lesser performance standard than the rest of the class. After all, students with academic deficits must actually *accelerate* learning to close the skill-gap with peers, so allowing them to do less is simply not a realistic option.

Read on for guidelines on how to select classroom accommodations to promote school success, verify whether a student actually *needs* a particular accommodation, and judge when accommodations should be used in instruction even if not allowed on state tests.

Identifying Appropriate Accommodations: Access vs. Target Skills. As an aid in determining whether a particular accommodation both supports individual student differences and sustains a demanding academic environment, teachers should distinguish between *target* and *access* skills (Tindal, Daesik, & Ketterlin, 2008). *Target skills* are those academic skills that the teacher is actively trying to assess or to teach. Target skills are therefore 'non-negotiable'; the teacher must ensure that these skills are not compromised in the instruction or assessment of any general-education student. For example, a 4th-grade teacher sets as a target skill for his class the development of computational fluency in basic multiplication facts. To work toward this goal, the teacher has his class complete a worksheet of 20 computation problems under timed conditions. This teacher would not allow a typical student who struggles with computation to do fewer than the assigned 20 problems, as this change would undermine the target skill of computational fluency that is the purpose of the assignment.

In contrast*, access skills* are those needed for the student to take part in a class assessment or instructional activity but are not themselves the target of current assessment or instruction. Access skills, therefore, *can* be the focus of accommodations, as altering them may remove a barrier to student participation but will not compromise the academic rigor of classroom activities. For example, a 7th-grade teacher assigns a 5-paragraph essay as an in-class writing assignment. She notes that one student finds the access skill of handwriting to be difficult and aversive, so she instead allows that student the accommodation of writing his essay on a classroom desktop computer. While the access skill (method of text production) is altered, the teacher preserves the integrity of those elements of the assignment that directly address the target skill (i.e., the student must still produce a full 5-paragraph essay).

Matching Accommodations to Students: Look for the 'Differential Boost'. The first principle in using accommodations in general-education classrooms, then, is that they should address access rather than target

academic skills. However, teachers may also wish to identify whether an individual actually benefits from a particular accommodation strategy. A useful tool to investigate this question is the 'differential boost' test (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999). The teacher examines a student's performance both with and without the accommodation and asks these 2 questions: (1) Does the student perform significantly better *with* the accommodation than without?, and (2) Does the accommodation boost that particular student's performance substantially *beyond* what could be expected if it were given to all students in the class? If the answer to both questions is YES, there is clear evidence that this student receives a 'differential boost' from the accommodation and that this benefit can be explained as a unique rather than universal response. With such evidence in hand, the teacher should feel confident that the accommodation is an appropriate match for the student. (Of course, if a teacher observes that most or all of a class seems to benefit from a particular accommodation idea, the best course is probably to revise the assignment or assessment activity to incorporate the accommodation!)

For example, a teacher may routinely allocate 20 minutes for her class to complete an in-class writing assignment and finds that all but one of her students are able to complete the assignment adequately within that time. She therefore allows this one student 10 minutes of additional time for the assignment and discovers that his work is markedly better with this accommodation. The evidence shows that, in contrast to peers, the student gains a clear 'differential boost' from the accommodation of extended time because (1) his writing product is substantially improved when using it, while (2) few if any other students appear to need it.

Classroom Accommodations and State Tests: To Allow or Not to Allow? Teachers may sometimes be reluctant to allow a student to access classroom accommodations if the student cannot use those same accommodations on high-stakes state assessments (TIndal & Fuchs, 1999). This view is understandable; teachers do not want students to become dependent on accommodations only to have those accommodations yanked away at precisely the moment when the student needs them most. While the teacher must be the ultimate judge, however, there are 3 good reasons to consider allowing a general-education student to access accommodations in the classroom that will be off-limits during state testing.

1. *Accommodations can uncover 'academic blockers'.* The teacher who is able to identify which student access skills may require instructional accommodations is also in a good position to provide interventions proactively to strengthen those deficient access skills. For example, an instructor might note that a student does poorly on math word problems because that student has limited reading decoding skills. While the teacher may match the student to a peer who reads the word problems aloud (texts read) as a classroom accommodation, the teacher and school can also focus on improving that student's decoding skills so that she can complete similar math problems independently when taking the next state examinations.

2. *Accommodations can promote content knowledge.* Students who receive in-class accommodations are likely to increase their skills and knowledge in the course or subject content substantially beyond the level to be expected without such supports. It stands to reason that individuals whose academic skills have been strengthened through the right mix of classroom accommodations will come to the state tests with greater mastery of the content on which they are to be tested.

3. *Accommodations can build self-confidence.* When students receive classroom accommodations, they are empowered to better understand their unique pattern of learning strengths and weaknesses and the strategies that work best for them. Self-knowledge can build self-confidence. And not only are such students primed to advocate for their own educational needs; they are also well-placed to develop compensatory strategies to manage difficult, high-stakes academic situations where support is minimal--such as on state tests.

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How To: Create a Written Record of Classroom Interventions

When general-education students begin to struggle with academic or behavioral issues, the classroom teacher will typically select and implement one or more evidence-based intervention strategies to assist those students. But a strong intervention plan needs more than just well-chosen interventions. It also requires 4 additional components (Witt, VanDerHeyden, & Gilbertson, 2004): (1) student concerns should be clearly and specifically defined; (2) one or more methods of formative assessment should be used to track the effectiveness of the intervention; (3) baseline student data should be collected prior to the intervention; and (4) a goal for student improvement should be calculated before the start of the intervention to judge whether that intervention is ultimately successful. If a single one of these essential 4 components is missing, the intervention is to be judged as fatally flawed (Witt, VanDerHeyden, & Gilbertson, 2004) and as not meeting minimum Response to Intervention standards.

Teachers need a standard format to use in documenting their classroom intervention plans. The *Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet* that appears later in this article is designed to include all of the essential documentation elements of an effective intervention plan. Sam The form includes space to document:

- *Case information*. In this first section of the form, the teacher notes general information, such as the name of the target student, the adult(s) responsible for carrying out the intervention, the date the intervention plan is being created, the expected start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will be in place. Most importantly, this section includes a description of the student problem; research shows that the most significant step in selecting an effective classroom intervention is to correctly identify the target student concern(s) in clear, specific, measureable terms (Bergan, 1995).
- *Intervention.* The teacher describes the evidence-based intervention(s) that will be used to address the identified student concern(s). As a shortcut, the instructor can simply write the intervention name in this section and attach a more detailed intervention script/description to the intervention plan.
- *Materials.* The teacher lists any materials (e.g., flashcards, wordlists, worksheets) or other resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) necessary for the intervention.
- *Training.* If adults and/or the target student require any training prior to the intervention, the teacher records those training needs in this section of the form.
- *Progress-Monitoring.* The teacher selects a method to monitor student progress during the intervention. For the method selected, the instructor records what type of data is to be used, collects and enters student baseline (starting-point) information, calculates an intervention outcome goal, and notes how frequently he or she plans to monitor the intervention.

A completed example of the *Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet* that includes a math computation intervention can be found later in this article.

While a simple intervention documentation form is a helpful planning tool, schools should remember that teachers will need other resources and types of assistance as well to be successful in selecting and using classroom interventions. For example, teachers should have access to an 'intervention menu' that contains evidence-based strategies to address the most common academic and behavioral concerns and should be able to get coaching support as they learn how to implement new classroom intervention ideas.

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Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet

This worksheet is designed to help teachers to quickly create classroom plans for academic and behavioral interventions. (For a tutorial on how to fill out this sheet, review the accompanying directions.)

Case Information

What to Write: Record the important case information, including student, person delivering the intervention, date of plan, start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will run.

Student:		Interventionist(s):		Date Intervention Plan Was Written:	
Date Intervention is to Start:		Date Intervention is to End:		Total Number of Intervention Weeks:	
Description of the Student Problem:					

Intervention

What to Write: Write a brief description of the intervention(s) to be used with this student. TIP: If you have a script for this intervention, you can just write its name here and attach the script to this sheet.

Materials

What to Write: Jot down materials (e.g., flashcards) or resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) needed to carry out this intervention.

Training

What to Write: Note what training--if any--is needed to prepare adult(s) and/or the student to carry out the intervention.

Progress-Monitoring

What to Write: Select a method to monitor student progress on this intervention. For the method selected, record what type of data is to be used, enter student baseline (starting-point) information, calculate an intervention outcome goal, and note how frequently you plan to monitor the intervention. Tip: Several ideas for classroom data collection appear on the right side of this table.

Type of Data Used to Monitor:	
Baseline	Outcome Goal
How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly):	

<u>Ideas for Intervention Progress-Monitoring</u>

- Existing data: grades, homework logs, etc.
- Cumulative mastery log
- Rubric
- Curriculum-based measurement
- Behavior report card
- Behavior checklist

Classroom Intervention Planning Sheet: Math Computation Example

This worksheet is designed to help teachers to quickly create classroom plans for academic and behavioral interventions. (For a tutorial on how to fill out this sheet, review the accompanying directions.)

Case Information

What to Write: Record the important case information, including student, person delivering the intervention, date of plan, start and end dates for the intervention plan, and the total number of instructional weeks that the intervention will run.

Student:	*John Samuelson-Gr 4*	Interventionist(s):	*Mrs. Kennedy, classroom teacher*	Date Intervention Plan Was Written:	*10 October 2012*
Date Intervention is to Start:	*M 8 Oct 2012*	Date Intervention is to End:	*F 16 Nov 2012*	Total Number of Intervention Weeks:	*6 weeks*
Description of the Student Problem:	*Slow math computation speed (computes multiplication facts at 12 correct digits in 2 minutes, when typical gr 4 peers compute at least 24 correct digits).*				

Intervention

What to Write: Write a brief description of the intervention(s) to be used with this student. TIP: If you have a script for this intervention, you can just write its name here and attach the script to this sheet.

Math Computation Time Drill.(Rhymer et al., 2002)

Explicit time-drills are a method to boost students' rate of responding on arithmetic-fact worksheets: (1) The teacher hands out the worksheet. Students are instructed that they will have 3 minutes to work on problems on the sheet. (2) The teacher starts the stop watch and tells the students to start work. (3) At the end of the first minute in the 3-minute span, the teacher 'calls time', stops the stopwatch, and tells the students to underline the last number written and to put their pencils in the air. Then students are told to resume work and the teacher restarts the stopwatch. (4) This process is repeated at the end of minutes 2 and 3. (5) At the conclusion of the 3 minutes, the teacher collects the student worksheets.

Materials

What to Write: Jot down materials (e.g., flashcards) or resources (e.g., Internet-connected computer) needed to carry out this intervention.

Use math worksheet generator on www.interventioncentral.org to create all time-drill and assessment materials.

Training

What to Write: Note what training--if any--is needed to prepare adult(s) and/or the student to carry out the intervention.

Meet with the student at least once before the intervention to familiarize with the time-drill technique and timed math computation assessments.

Progress-Monitoring

What to Write: Select a method to monitor student progress on this intervention. For the method selected, record what type of data is to be used, enter student baseline (starting-point) information, calculate an intervention outcome goal, and note how frequently you plan to monitor the intervention. Tip: Several ideas for classroom data collection appear on the right side of this table.

Type of Data Used to Monitor: *Curriculum-based measurement: math computation assessments: 2 minute single-skill probes*

Baseline	Outcome Goal
12 correct digits per 2 minute probe	*24 correct digits per 2 minute probe*

How often will data be collected? (e.g., daily, every other day, weekly): *WEEKLY*

Ideas for Intervention Progress-Monitoring

- Existing data: grades, homework logs, etc.
- Cumulative mastery log
- Rubric
- Curriculum-based measurement
- Behavior report card
- Behavior checklist

How To: Identify the Big Ideas To Guide Behavior Management

Teachers skilled in classroom management are able to respond appropriately to just about any behavior that a student brings through the classroom door. While having a toolkit of specific behavioral strategies is important, the real secret of educators who maintain smoothly running classrooms with minimal behavioral disruptions is that they are able to view problem student behaviors through the lens of these seven 'big ideas' in behavior management:

1. *Check for academic problems.* The correlation between classroom misbehavior and deficient academic skills is high (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). Teachers should, therefore, routinely assess a student's academic skills as a first step when attempting to explain why a particular behavior is occurring. And it logically follows that, when poor academics appear to drive problem behaviors, the intervention that the teacher selects should address the student's academic deficit.

2. *Identify the underlying function of the behavior.* Problem behaviors occur for a reason. Such behaviors serve a *function* for the student (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). The most commonly observed behavioral functions in classrooms are escape/avoidance and peer or adult attention (Packenham, Shute, & Reid, 2004). When an educator can identify the probable function sustaining a particular set of behaviors, the teacher has confidence that interventions selected to match the function will be correctly targeted and therefore likely to be effective. For example, if a teacher decides that a student's call-outs in class are sustained by the function of adult attention, that instructor may respond by shifting the flow of that attention-e.g., interacting minimally with the student during call-outs but boosting adult attention during times when the student shows appropriate behavior.

3. *Eliminate behavioral triggers.* Problem behaviors are often set off by events or conditions within the instructional setting (Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002). Sitting next to a distracting classmate or being handed an academic task that is too difficult to complete are two examples of events that might trigger student misbehavior. When the instructor is able to identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and--by preventing class disruptions--result in more time available for instruction (Kern & Clemens, 2007).

4. *Redefine the behavioral goal as a replacement behavior*. When a student displays challenging behaviors, it can be easy to fall into the trap of simply wishing that those misbehaviors would go away. The point of a behavioral intervention, however, should be to expand the student's repertoire of pro-social, pro-academic behaviors--rather than just extinguishing aberrant behaviors. By selecting a positive behavioral goal that is an appropriate replacement for the student's original problem behavior, the teacher reframes the student concern in a manner that allows for more effective intervention planning (Batsche, Castillo, Dixon, & Forde, 2008). For example, an instructor who is concerned that a student is talking with peers about non-instructional topics during independent seatwork might select as a replacement behavior that the student will engage in "active, accurate academic responding".

5. *Rule out the most likely causes for misbehavior first*. Teachers can access a wealth of information sources when attempting to identify the cause of misbehavior: e.g., student work products, direct observation; interviews (with the student, other teachers, parents), etc. However, when trying to understand misbehavior, educators may be too quick to choose global explanations that fit preconceptions of the student--but are not supported by the data. For example, a teacher may describe a student who is non-compliant and fails to complete classwork as 'apathetic', 'unmotivated', or 'lazy'. However, students are rarely so sealed off from the world that their behavioral problems are determined solely by their own attitudes or work ethic. It is far more likely that a student displays challenging behavior because of significant interactions with elements of his or her environment (e.g., attempting to escape work that is too difficult; seeking the attention of peers in the classroom). Instructors should first collect and analyze information on the student from several sources and rule out the most common ('low-inference') explanations for misbehavior (Christ, 2008) before considering whether students' internal levels of motivation

could be the primary cause of the problem behavior.

6. *Be flexible in responding to misbehavior.* Teachers have greater success in managing the full spectrum of student misbehaviors when they respond flexibly--evaluating each individual case and applying strategies that logically address the likely cause(s) of that student's problem conduct (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003*).* An instructor may choose to respond to a non-compliant student with a warning and additional disciplinary consequences, for example, if evidence suggests that the misbehavior stems from his seeking peer attention and approval. However, that same teacher may respond to non-compliance with a behavioral conference and use of defusing strategies if the misbehavior appears to have been triggered by a negative peer comment.

7. *Manage behaviors through strong instruction.* A powerful method to prevent misbehavior is to keep students actively engaged in academic responding (Lewis, Hudson, Richter, & Johnson, 2004). A teacher is most likely to 'capture' a student's behavior for academic purposes when the instructor ensures that the student has the necessary academic skills to do the assigned classwork, is given explicit instruction to master difficult material, and receives timely feedback about his or her academic performance (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008).

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How To: Implement Critical Elements of Strong Core Classroom Behavior Management

Students in classrooms are always engaged in behavior of some sort: listening to the teacher, completing independent work, talking to a friend, looking out the window. The constant unfolding of a student's behaviors can be thought of metaphorically as a 'behavior stream' (Schoenfeld & Farmer, 1970). The teacher's task is to channel this stream of students' behaviors toward productive academic engagement--resulting in both an improved behavioral climate and better school outcomes. In the well-managed classroom, the teacher dedicates as much time as possible to instruction, arranges instructional activities to fully engage the student learner, and uses proactive strategies to manage behaviors (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

Below is a checklist containing six elements that are critical to strong core classroom behavior management. Teachers can use this checklist proactively to ensure that these elements are in place. School administrators and consultants will find that the checklist serves as a helpful framework when they provide guidance to instructors on how to strengthen classroom behavior management.

Checklist: Critical Elements of Strong Core Classroom Behavior Management	
Behavior-Management Element	Notes
Components of Effective Instruction. The teacher's lesson and instructional activities include these components (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008): ☐ *Instructional match.* Students are placed in work that provides them with an appropriate level of challenge (not too easy and not too difficult). ☐ *Explicit instruction.* The teacher delivers instruction using modeling, demonstration, supervised student practice, etc. ☐ *Active student engagement.* There are sufficient opportunities during the lesson for students to be actively engaged and 'show what they know'. ☐ *Timely performance feedback.* Students receive feedback about their performance on independent seatwork, as well as whole-group and small-group activities.	
Explicit Teaching of Behavioral Expectations. Students have been explicitly taught classroom behavioral expectations. Those positive behaviors are acknowledged and reinforced on an ongoing basis (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007).	
Students Trained in Basic Class Routines. The teacher has clearly established routines to deal with common classroom activities (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002). These routines include but are not limited to:	

☐ Engaging students in meaningful academic activities at the start of class (e.g., using bell-ringer activities) ☐ Assigning and collecting homework and classwork ☐ Transitioning students efficiently between activities ☐ Independent seatwork and cooperative learning groups ☐ Students leaving and reentering the classroom ☐ Dismissing students at the end of the period	
Positive Classroom Rules Posted. The classroom has a set of 3-8 rules or behavioral expectations posted. When possible, those rules are stated in positive terms as 'goal' behaviors (e.g. 'Students participate in learning activities without distracting others from learning'). The rules are frequently reviewed (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).	
Effective Teacher Directives. The teacher delivers clear directives to students that (1) are delivered calmly, (2) are brief, (3) are stated when possible as DO statements rather than as DON'T statements, (4) use clear, simple language, and (5) are delivered one directive at a time and appropriately paced to avoid confusing or overloading students (Kern & Clemens, 2007; Walker & Walker, 1991). These directives are positive or neutral in tone, avoiding sarcasm or hostility and over-lengthy explanations that can distract or confuse students.	
Continuum of In-Class Consequences for Misbehavior. The teacher has developed a continuum of classroom-based consequences for misbehavior (e.g., redirect the student; have a brief private conference with the student; remove classroom privileges; send the student to another classroom for a brief timeout) that are used before the teacher considers administrative removal of the student from the classroom (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002). These strategies are used flexibly, matched to the behavioral situation and needs of the student (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).	

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How To: Improve Classroom Management Through Flexible Rules: The Color Wheel

The posting of classwide rules can help teachers to teach behavioral expectations and prevent problem behaviors (Simonsen et al., 2008). However, a single set of rules lacks flexibility. As students move from large group instruction to cooperative learning groups to less-structured free time (often during the same day and in the same classroom), behavioral expectations shift as well. The teacher who attempts to apply an unchanging set of behavioral rules across so varied a range of activities will be forced to suspend, amend, or ignore certain rules at certain times, creating potential uncertainty and confusion among students (Kirk et al., 2010). For example, the simple rule "To speak, raise hand for teacher permission" is useful in large-group instruction but does not transfer well to discussions in student-led groups.

The Color Wheel is one solution that enforces uniform group expectations for conduct while also responding flexibly to the differing behavioral demands of diverse learning activities. This classwide intervention divides all activities into 3 categories and links each category to a color: green for free time/ low-structure activities; yellow for large- or small-group instruction/independent work; and red for brief transitions between activities. The student learns a short list of behavioral rules for each category and, when given a color cue, can switch quickly from one set of rules to another.

Color Wheel: Steps. Here are the 5 steps to implementing the Color Wheel in the classroom (Fudge et al., 2008; Kirk et al., 2010):

Color Wheel Behaviors: Sample List
Green Condition: Free Time/Low-Structure Activities
• Talk in a quiet voice
• Keep hands and feet to self
• Comply with directions
Yellow Condition: Large- or Small-Group Instruction/Independent Work
• To speak, raise hand for teacher permission
• To leave seat, raise hand for teacher permission
• Look at the speaker or your work
• Comply with directions
Red Condition: Transitions Between Activities
• Return to your seat
• Clear your desk
• Look at the teacher
• Do not talk

1. *Define behavioral expectations for each color*. The teacher develops a short list of rules summarizing the behavioral expectations for each of the color levels in the Color Wheel: green (free time/ low-structure activities); yellow (large- or small-group instruction/independent work); and red (transitioning between activities). The table on the right provides a starter-set of appropriate behaviors by color condition that the teacher can edit to match the developmental level of a particular classroom.

2. *Create Color rules posters.* The teacher next creates posters to be publicly posted for this intervention. The instructor copies the rules for each color level in large, legible script onto posterboard of a matching color (e.g., green color level rules are copied onto green posterboard, etc.). (See Figure 1 below for an example of Color Wheel posters.)

3. *Create the Color Wheel.* The teacher assembles the Color Wheel, a simple device for alerting students to the current color condition in effect in the classroom. The simplest way to create a Color Wheel is to cut a large disk (12 inches or greater) from white posterboard. The disk is partitioned into thirds with heavy black lines--like a pie divided into 3 large slices. Each of the 3 pie-slices is then colored in with one of the green/yellow/red colors. The teacher then affixes a large posterboard arrow in the center of the circle -- using a brad (paper fastener) to allow the arrow to rotate. (See Figure 1 below for an example of a Color Wheel.)

4. *Train students in the Color Wheel procedures.* The teacher posts the Color Wheel and colored behavior posters in a location visible to all students. The instructor explains the color levels and describes the activities associated with each. Next, the teacher uses the colored posters to review the behavioral expectations associated with each color level. The teacher gives specific descriptions of acceptable behaviors and their boundaries (e.g., "At the

red level, when you clear your desks, your materials go into desks, backpacks, and cubbies--you should not stack any materials on the floor."). The teacher next demonstrates the Color Wheel, showing how the arrow indicator will always point to the color condition currently in effect as a guide to which colored rules poster the students will follow.

5. *Begin the Color Wheel intervention.* The teacher then starts the Color Wheel intervention. To prepare students to adjust quickly to new color conditions, the instructor always gives a 30-second warning when the Color Wheel is about the change. (If students have difficulty with this single reminder, the instructor may want to give both a 2-minute and 30-second warning.) The teacher also regularly praises students for following posted behaviors. For maximum effectiveness, classwide praise should be intermixed with praise to small groups and individuals. Praise should also be 'labeled', clearly describing the behaviors that are praise-worthy (e.g., "This reading group transitioned quickly and quietly to the math lesson. Nice work!").

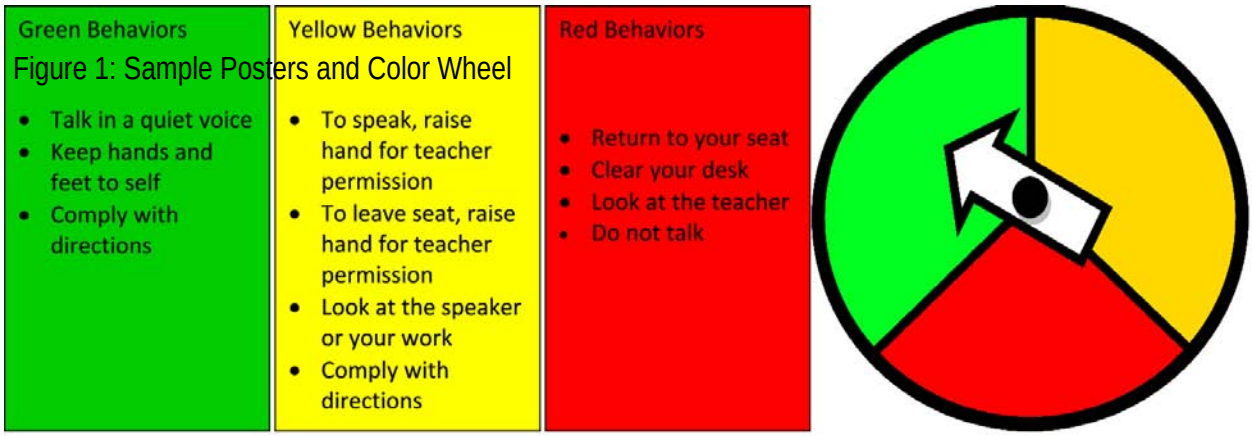

Figure 1: Sample Posters and Color Wheel

Color Wheel: Additional Considerations. Although the Color Wheel system is fairly easy to implement, teachers should be mindful of these recommendations (Fudge, et al., 2008)

1. *Keep the Color Wheel 'red' periods short.* The red condition of the Color Wheel covers transitions between activities--which should always be brief in duration. Teachers should therefore keep students on the red phase only long enough complete the transition to a new green or yellow activity. Once students are trained to make efficient transitions, 3-5 minutes should be sufficient to move into and out of a red phase.

2. *Do not use the 'red' Color Wheel setting as punishment.* The behavioral expectations for the red (transitions) Color Wheel condition are the most restrictive, as students need to be seated, quiet, and focused on the teacher to learn the details of the upcoming activity. However, teachers should never set the classroom color condition to red simply to punish students for misbehavior. Linking the red condition with punishment raises the possibility that students will fail to comply with the red behavioral rules because they are seen as punitive rather than necessary to support an effective learning environment.

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RTI Problem-Solving Team Meeting 'Quality Indicators': A Checklist

School: _____ Date: _____ Student (Initials): _____

Directions: Use this checklist at the conclusion of your initial RTI Team meeting to compare your actual process against the 'quality indicators' listed below. Note your RTI Team's relative strengths / areas in need of improvement.

RTI Team Meeting 'Quality Indicator'	NOTES
1. Introductions/Statement of Purpose Stated. The meeting opened with introductions (e.g., names of those attending and their 'RTI Team' roles); statement about purpose, goal(s), and expected length of time for the meeting	
2. Problem(s) Clearly Defined in Advance. The student problem(s) were already defined in clear and specific terms at the start of the RTI Team meeting (because the Case Manager had met in advance with the teacher(s)). Also, if necessary, teacher concerns were prioritized and limited to no more than two.	
3. RTI Team Roles Assigned. Team members effectively assumed the following roles: ❑ Case Manager (Pre-Meeting) ❑ Facilitator ❑ Recorder ❑ Time-Keeper ❑ Coordinator	
4. RTI Team Meeting Structure Followed. The RTI Team meeting followed this problem-solving structure: ❑ Step 1: Assess Teacher Concerns ❑ Step 2: Inventory Student Strengths/Talents ❑ Step 3: Review Background/Baseline Data ❑ Step 4: Select Target Teacher Concerns ❑ Step 5: Set Academic and/or Behavioral Outcome Goals and Methods for Progress-Monitoring ❑ Step 6: Design an Intervention Plan ❑ Step 7: Plan How to Share Meeting Information with the Student's Parent(s) ❑ Step 8: Review Intervention & Monitoring Plans The meeting progressed with few interruptions or digressions.	
5. Sufficient Data Collected. There was sufficient academic and behavioral data presented at the meeting to allow the RTI Team to adequately understand the student problem(s). (This data included existing information from the school database and/or additional data such as direct observations or student academic assessment collected prior to the meeting.)	
6. Intervention Plan Built from Research-Based Elements. The intervention programs and/or ideas recommended by the RTI Team to address the student concern are supported by research.	

RTI Team Meeting 'Quality Indicator'	NOTES
7. **Progress-Monitoring Plan Developed.** A plan was developed to monitor the student's progress while on intervention. The plan required at least weekly progress-monitoring. It also incorporated source(s) of data that are reliable and valid—and included both a baseline reading of student performance and a clear post-intervention goal for student improvement.	
8. **Student Input Solicited.** If appropriate, the school collected information from the student to better understand the presenting problem(s) by: ❑ interviewing the student at a pre-meeting (e.g., with the teacher or school counselor), and/or ❑ inviting the (middle or high school) student to participate in the RTI Team meeting.	
9. **Teacher Participation Encouraged.** At least one teacher who works with the student attended the RTI Team meeting. Referring teacher(s) at the meeting were made to feel welcome, clearly understood the purpose of the meeting, were encouraged to share their views, and fully participated in the RTI problem-solving process.	
10. **Meeting Information Recorded.** All relevant intervention information shared at the RTI Team meeting was accurately recorded. The RTI Team expected to get a completed copy of the intervention plan by the end of the day to all educators participating in the student's RTI intervention plan.	
11. **Follow-Up Meeting Scheduled.** At the conclusion of the initial RTI Team meeting, the team and referring teacher(s) scheduled a follow-up meeting within a reasonable span of time (e.g., 6-8 weeks) to review the student's intervention progress.	

CAST Center Consultants: RTI Training: 'Next Steps' Planning Tool

Participant: _____ CAST: _____ Date: _____

Tier 1: Universal Instruction & Classroom Intervention. The classroom teacher is the RTI 'first responder', providing early (Tier 1) assistance to the struggling student. This training segment identifies the hallmarks of strong core instruction, and outlines the non-negotiable elements of classroom intervention.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this RTI goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
4. _____	1. _____
5. _____	2. _____

Additional Notes: _____

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Tier 2: Supplemental Intervention: Standard -Treatment Protocol. When students' academic or behavioral needs exceed the capacity of the classroom teacher alone, they are placed in supplemental Tier 2 interventions. Participants learn how to set up Tier 2 services across a school in a manner that both provides the right type and amount of support to at-risk students and does so in the most streamlined and effective manner possible.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
4. _____	1. _____
5. _____	2. _____

Additional Notes: _____

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Tier 3: Intensive Intervention: Problem-Solving Protocol. Students who fail to respond to lesser levels of support move into the Tier 3 intervention level and are reviewed by an RTI Problem-Solving Team, which meets to assemble a customized, intensive intervention plan for that student. Participants will learn how to recruit for and train an RTI Problem-Solving Team. The segment will also provide objective guidelines for judging whether a student on intensive intervention is an RTI 'non-responder' and may require more specialized evaluation.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
4. _____	1. _____
5. _____	2. _____

Additional Notes: _____

Academic & Behavioral Interventions. Interventions are practices and programs that have been researched and found to effect positive change in student academic and behavioral performance. This segment presents definitions of behavior and related terms (accommodations, modifications) provides clear guidelines for documenting interventions under RTI, and reviews free high-quality intervention resources available online to all participating schools. RTI case examples are presented illustrating selection, use, and documentation of interventions at tiers 1-3.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
4. _____	1. _____
5. _____	2. _____

Additional Notes: _____

Schoolwide Screening Tools. Schoolwide academic screeners are essential to RTI. They allow schools to conduct screenings of all students 3 times per year to judge the effectiveness of their core instruction as well as to proactively identify students at risk for academic failure and place those students into supplemental interventions.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
6. _____	3. _____
7. _____	4. _____
8. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
9. _____	3. _____
10. _____	4. _____

Additional Notes: _____

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RTI Systems-Level Change. When schools adopt the RTI model, they commit to comprehensive change throughout the educational system to better support struggling learners. This segment examines the role of the RTI Leadership Team in providing building or district oversight in rolling out the RTI model and in creating a multi-year plan to implement RTI. Additionally, participants will receive practical suggestions and resources for setting up professional development at a school to prepare staff to understand and embrace the RTI model.

List the 'next steps' that you plan to follow to accomplish this goal:	Who in your CAST network of schools will you need to enlist to help you with this goal?:
6. _____	3. _____
7. _____	4. _____
8. _____	What resources will you need beyond those supplied in this training to accomplish the goal?
9. _____	3. _____
10. _____	4. _____

Additional Notes: _____

_____