

**Response to Intervention
(RtI)
and
the Massachusetts Tiered-
System of Support
(MTSS)
A Practical Manual**

Somerset Public Schools

2015-2016

Vision

The Somerset Public Schools will ensure that students and teachers pursue excellence, achieve their full potential, and cherish learning as students prepare to be high school, college, career, and life ready.

Core Values

Perseverance

- Our students will accept the challenge of a rigorous learning environment and work through those challenges until they experience success.

Respect and Responsibility

- We will create a safe and supportive environment for all students and adults in which everyone feels valued and respected.
- All students will respect themselves, others, and their surroundings.
- We will create an environment in which everyone takes responsibility for their individual and collective actions.

Innovation

- Students and adults will be innovative problem solvers and purposeful and responsible users of technology.
- Students and staff will be skilled at and value collaborative problem solving.

Dedication to the Community

- We will help our students build character and learn respect as they become positive and caring contributors to society.

Excellence

- We will set high expectations for all students and staff.
- Our students will become effective communicators and independent, creative, and critical thinkers.

Theory of Action

IF we maximize professional collaboration and development opportunities for educators that focus on meeting the individual learning needs of students, and IF we enhance the curriculum and instruction to incorporate essential skills for the 21st century, and IF we organize the system infrastructure to support this work THEN we will provide a rich learning environment that prepares all students to be successful and achieve excellence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Response to Intervention (RtI) / Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

Response to Intervention is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RtI process begins with high-quality, differentiated instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. Student progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction. RtI is designed for use when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by child outcome data. (<http://www.RtInetwork.org/learn/what/whatisRtI>)

MTSS provides a framework for school improvement that focuses on system structures and supports across the district, school, and classroom to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are academically advanced. It guides both the provision of high-quality core educational experiences in a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and academic and/or nonacademic targeted interventions/supports for students who experience difficulties and for students who have already demonstrated mastery of the concept and skills being taught.

The academic and non-academic core components of MTSS are:

- high-quality core curriculum and instruction implemented with fidelity; and
- research-based academic interventions and assessment practices; and
- research-based behavioral interventions and supports; and
- universal screening and progress-monitoring; and
- collaboration and communication between educators and parents.

(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/mtss/blueprint/ch1.pdf>)

Providing a tiered system of academic supports and interventions (RtI), is one facet of MTSS. However, this aspect of MTSS will be the focus of the Somerset Public Schools in 2015-2016.

Federal and state regulations

As we discover more about the way students learn, the educational system evolves to meet the growing needs of those being served. In the recent history, significant transformations have occurred in our educational system through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. These pieces of legislation gave structure to the unifying beliefs that all children can learn; early intervention is the key to preventing or minimizing long-term problems; and high expectations yield higher results.

Specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 authorized local education agencies to use Response to Intervention “RtI” models. RtI is designed to accomplish three important goals:

1. Ensure all students receive high-quality, research-based instruction;
2. Provide progress monitoring tools that will be utilized in making data-driven decisions in terms of interventions and modifications; and,
3. Provide a flexible, tiered system of academic supports that are responsive to student needs and increase in intensity to accelerate the rate of learning.

Legal mandates are found in federal and state regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Specifically, federal regulations require districts to document that students in special education are not experiencing learning difficulties primarily because of either a lack of competency with the English language or inadequate access to effective instruction in reading and math (IDEA Sec 300.306). In addition, federal regulations further require that no student has a learning disability without a district first documenting the appropriateness of instruction and the extent to which the child nevertheless failed to achieve state age or grade level standards (300.309). State regulations (603 CMR 28.04(2)(a)(2)) describe assessment requirements for determining eligibility for specific learning disabilities.

Key components

1. Leadership and Governance: Leadership at the state, district, and building level is crucial to the fidelity of RtI implementation. It is important to establish a long-term commitment to resources and time, as well as moving the focus of RtI from philosophical understanding to actual practice. The impact of RtI involves significant systematic changes which will need to be supported throughout implementation at all levels.
2. Curriculum and Instruction: RtI involves a tiered system of interventions designed to meet the needs of all students. A strong curriculum based on state and national standards and high-quality instruction are essential.
3. School Climate and Culture: A positive school climate provides the foundation on which instruction will occur and all students will be engaged in learning. *Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) provide systematic strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes, while preventing problem behavior with all students. The Somerset Public Schools will be developing a PBIS implementation plan for in the future.*
4. Problem-Solving Process for Decision Making: The purpose of the problem-solving process is to provide a decision-making process that will lead to the development of instructional and intervention strategies with a high probability of success. The system must integrate the use of data, both to guide the development of effective interventions and to provide frequent monitoring of progress.
5. Assessment/Progress Monitoring: Using reliable and on-going data to drive the decision-making process, at the individual student, classroom, and school levels, is a major component of any RtI system. There are three key types of assessments:
 - a. Universal Screening: Otherwise known as benchmarks, screenings are measures of overall ability and critical skills known to be strong indicators that predict student performance. Screenings are administered to all students in grades K-8 up to three times

per year. Universal screenings are used to identify students who need additional assessments to determine the potential for intervention. Screenings also provide information to the district regarding the effectiveness of the core instruction and if it is meeting the needs of most students.

- b. Progress Monitoring: Progress monitoring are brief (1-5 minute) measures used to determine whether students are making adequate progress. Progress monitoring provides information on the effectiveness of instruction and whether to modify the intervention. Progress monitoring is often done frequently ranging from once weekly to every couple of weeks.
- c. Formative Assessments: Formative assessments are assessments for learning. They are the daily, on-going assessments in class that teachers use to improve student learning while there is still time to act – before the graded event.

II: THE TIERED MODEL

Tier 1: Core Level

Standards-aligned instruction and school-wide foundational interventions are provided to **all** students in the general education core curriculum. It is characterized by the following:

- All students receive instruction in an empirically supported core curriculum
- According to research, typically, about 80% of students in a school will respond to a high-quality core curriculum and will make adequate progress throughout the year
- Progress of all students is monitored at three points in time, or “Benchmarks,” during the Fall, Winter, and Spring of each school year
- Benchmark data indicate students who may not be responding adequately to the core curriculum and who are in need of additional instruction

Tier I also is used to designate students who are making expected **grade level progress** (benchmark students) in the standards-aligned system and who demonstrate social competence.

Tier 1 includes the curriculum, the core program, and the instruction that goes on in the regular classes; universal screening; and any other supplemental materials that are used with the core program or to support the curriculum. Instruction should be taking place at Tier 1 in such a way that it helps most of the student population to meet grade-level standards. In other words, if a teacher reviews the data sources and sees that there are more than 20% of students who seem to need Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions, then changes need to be made to Tier 1.

Tier 2: Supplemental, or Strategic, Level

Tier 2 includes standards-aligned instruction with supplemental, small group instruction, which may include specialized materials. Tier 2 services are generally provided inside the regular classroom. However, in some cases this may not be appropriate. Tier 2 is provided in addition to Tier 1. In other words, students still attend and complete the work from the regular class. The interventions that are selected are provided **in addition to** the regular class.

- Students who do not respond adequately to the core curriculum
- Smaller group of students – Approximately 15% of the students in a school
- Considered “at-risk”
- Provided supplemental instruction/intervention (in addition to the core curriculum), which takes place about 2-3 times per week and often in small group formats using standard protocol interventions
- Student progress monitored more frequently: at least once weekly
- Most students at this level will make sufficient progress given this supplemental instruction and are “returned” to the Tier I level

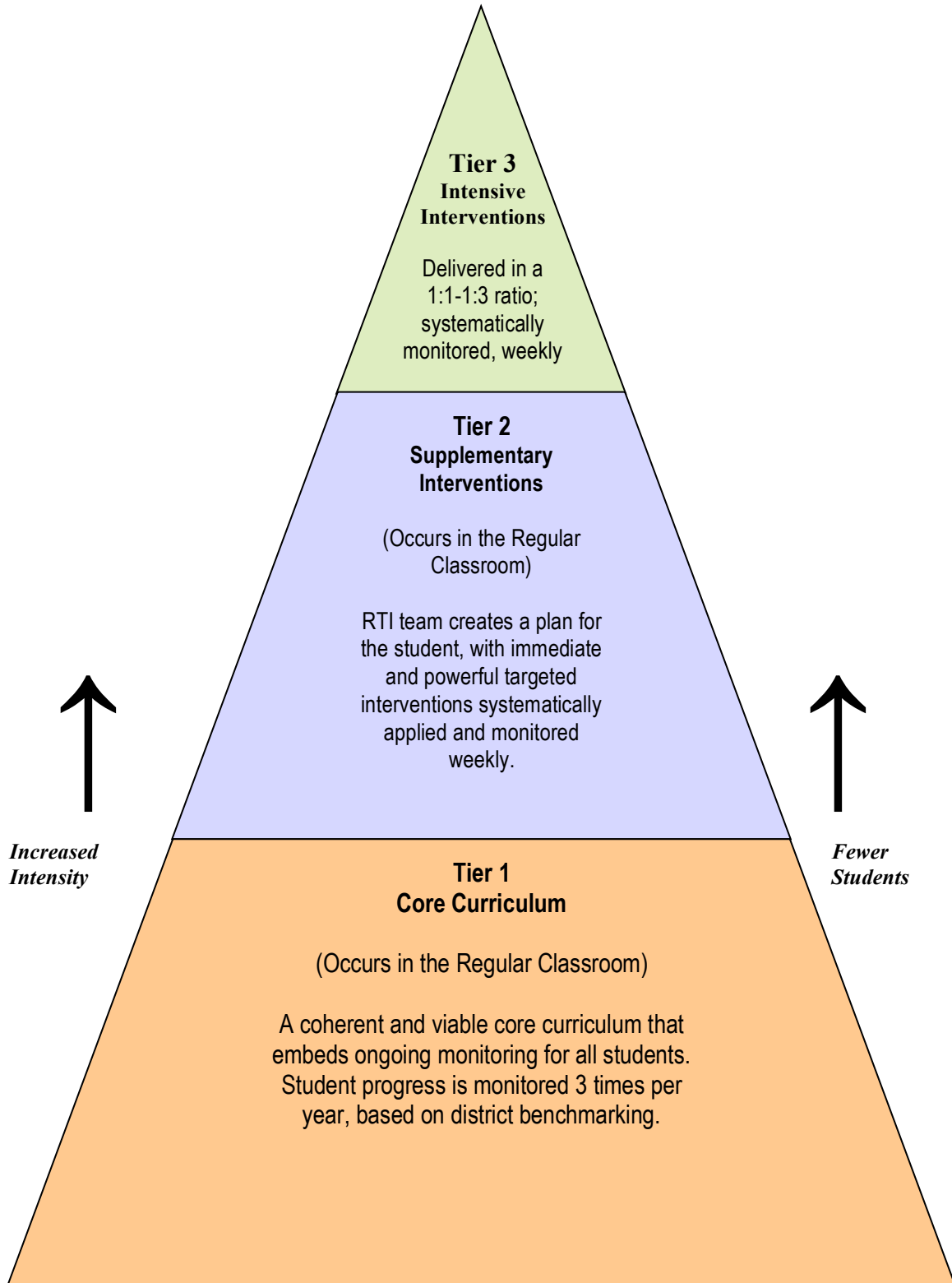
Tier 3: Intensive Level

Tier 3 are intensive supports intended for students with significant and/or chronic deficits as well as for students with significant underachievement who require the most intensive services available in a school. Moving to a Tier 3 intervention is determined by the problem-solving team after several individualized interventions have resulted in limited progress, based on the achievement gap between the student's progress and the expected benchmark. The interventions in Tier 3 are skill-specific interventions that can be delivered by a variety of providers. Interventions are more likely to occur outside the general classroom than at the two previous levels.

Therefore, a student who receives Tier 3 interventions/support also receives Tier 1 support (everything that occurs in the regular class).

- Students who do not respond adequately to core curriculum *and* strategic level interventions
- Approximately 5% of the students in a school
- Considered in need of intensive intervention
- Provided high-quality, research-based interventions; individually or in small groups (1:1-1:3 teacher to student ratio)
- May use an individualized problem-solving model to derive instruction
- Student progress monitored more frequently: 1 to 2 times per week
- Changes are made to the student's intervention based upon his/her data and progress toward a specified goal
- Students who make adequate progress at this level are returned to Tier II or Tier I level

Somerset Public Schools Tiered RtI Model



More than one intervention should occur at Tiers 2 and 3 if the initial intervention proves unsuccessful.

III: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TEAMS

Important Roles and Expectations

District Administration

Superintendent

- Ensures necessary resources are available to meet the needs of all students
- Participates in data meetings when available
- Communicates to the School Committee of progress students receiving interventions make as well as overall student achievement data
- Ensures all State and Federal regulations are met
- Evaluates the effectiveness of intervention programs based on student progress

Director of Curriculum and Assessment

- Participates in trimester data meetings
- Ensures all State and Federal regulations are met
- Evaluates the effectiveness of intervention programs based on student progress
- Evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum and the core classroom instruction
- Provides professional development for classroom teachers to support students

Director of Special Education

- Participates in data meetings when available
- Monitors individual student progress
- Oversees placement decisions
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs
- Provides professional development for classroom teachers to support students

Building Administration

Principal / Assistant Principal

- Manages building level intervention programs
- Maintains data on student progress
- Organizes and participates in trimester data meetings
- Ensures appropriate communication goes to parents of students enrolled in intervention programs
- Evaluates teacher instruction
- Approves professional growth opportunities
- Manages a school schedule that provides intervention efficiency and effectiveness
-

Building Personnel

Reading Specialists

- Administers assessments for screening and diagnostic purposes
- Provides direct services to some students in reading intervention programs
- Consults with classroom teachers on service delivery
- Monitors individual student progress
- Communicates with parents on individual student progress
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs
- Schedules and prepares data, paperwork, etc. for trimester data meetings
- Provides professional development for classroom teachers to support students

Classroom Teachers

- Administers assessments for screening and diagnostic purposes
- Provides direct services in the classroom to students with intervention needs
- Consults with reading specialists on service delivery
- Monitors individual student progress
- Participates in trimester data meetings
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs
- Communicates with parents on individual student interventions and progress
- Communicates with Principal to discuss lack of progress and if a student support team meeting needs to be scheduled
- Informs problem solving team of classroom progress of individual students

Special Education Teacher (if applicable)

- Administers assessments for screening and diagnostic purposes
- Provides direct services in and out of the classroom to students with special education needs
- Monitors individual student progress for IEP students
- Communicates with parents on individual student progress
- Informs problem solving team of progress of individual students
- Participates in trimester data meetings
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs

Guidance Counselor /Social Adjustment Counselor (if applicable)

- Administers social assessments for screening and diagnostic purposes
- Provides direct social work services to students in need
- Monitors individual student progress for those on case load
- Participates in trimester data meetings as needed
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs
- Communicates with parents on individual student interventions and progress
- Informs problem solving team of social or emotional progress of individual students

Speech/Language Pathologist (if applicable)

- Administers speech/language assessments for screening and diagnostic purposes
- Provides direct services in the classroom to students with speech/language needs
- Monitors individual student progress for those on case load
- Participates in trimester data meetings
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs
- Communicates with parents on individual student interventions and progress
- Informs problem solving team of speech/language progress of individual students

School Psychologist (if applicable)

- Provides data analysis for trimester data meetings as needed
- Administers necessary assessments
- Recommends interventions to address individual needs

Teams

	Suggested Membership	Purpose	Responsibilities
School-wide Data Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal / Asst. Principal • Reading Specialist • School Psychologist • Classroom Teacher • Special Educator 	School-wide data-based decisions	<p>Provides school-wide leadership for RtI</p> <p>Analyzes school and grade-level data (academic and behavioral)</p> <p>Supports faculty in using data to drive instruction</p>
Grade-Level Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade level teachers • Reading specialist • Grade level special educators • School Psychologist, if applicable 	<p>Grade-level data-based decisions</p> <p>Small group and individual student data-based decisions</p>	<p>Analyze assessment data of grade level students</p> <p>Plan for effective, differentiated tier 1 instruction</p> <p>Choose and plan targeted group interventions</p> <p>Review data-based progress of students receiving interventions</p>
Problem Solving Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal / Asst. Principal • Reading Specialist • School Psychologist • Classroom Teacher(s) • Special Educator(s) • SLP • Guidance counselor (if applicable) • Other specialists (OT, ELL, etc.) 	Individual student data-based decisions	<p>Conduct individual student problem solving</p> <p>Choose and plan interventions</p> <p>Analyze progress of students receiving intensive interventions</p> <p>Provide coaching, resource materials, mentoring to staff</p>

IV: ASSESSMENTS and Data Meetings

Data Meetings

Data meetings are held at the Elementary and Middle School three times a year in October, February and May. The data meeting includes the Grade-Level Teams, building leadership, if possible, and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment. At the conclusion of the Data Meetings, Instructional Planning Forms (IPFs) are developed. An IPF is a document that specifies the intervention(s) a student will receive including the educator(s) responsible for the intervention, the materials used, the amount of time per day/week and the assessment that will be used for progress monitoring. IPFs are completed at data meetings with participation from the entire team. Approximately six weeks after the Data Meeting, the Reading Specialists meet with the grade level team to review progress of students in interventions and make adjustments as needed.

	Reading	Math
September /October	Fall Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided	Fall Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided
November/ December	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)
January /February	Winter Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided	Winter Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided
March/April	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)
May	Spring Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided	Spring Data Meeting to look at Screening (45-90 minutes) CPT or coverage provided
June	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)	Progress Review Meeting to look at data of students receiving interventions (45 minutes)

Data Meeting Agendas

Data Meetings

Purpose:

To use data to drive our instruction, determine our resources, and best serve our students needs.

Outcomes:

1. To create instructional groups using universal screening and district-wide data
2. To create intervention plans for students receiving Tier 3 and Tier 2 services and discuss any necessary changes.
3. To determine a progress monitoring plan for students in need of additional support.
4. To revise IPF forms as needed to reflect current practices.
5. To revisit and revise class schedules and support schedules as appropriate to meet the needs of students.

Agenda:

1. Review today's process and outcomes
2. Review data
3. Review list of Tier 2 and 3 and watch students
4. Celebrate progress of students
5. Review current groups, as appropriate, based on teacher feedback and data
6. Review (as needed) intervention plan for Tier 3 students
7. Review (as needed) intervention plan for Tier 2 students
8. Schedule follow up dates
9. Review commitments

V. PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS AND DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

RtI in Practice

Key Components

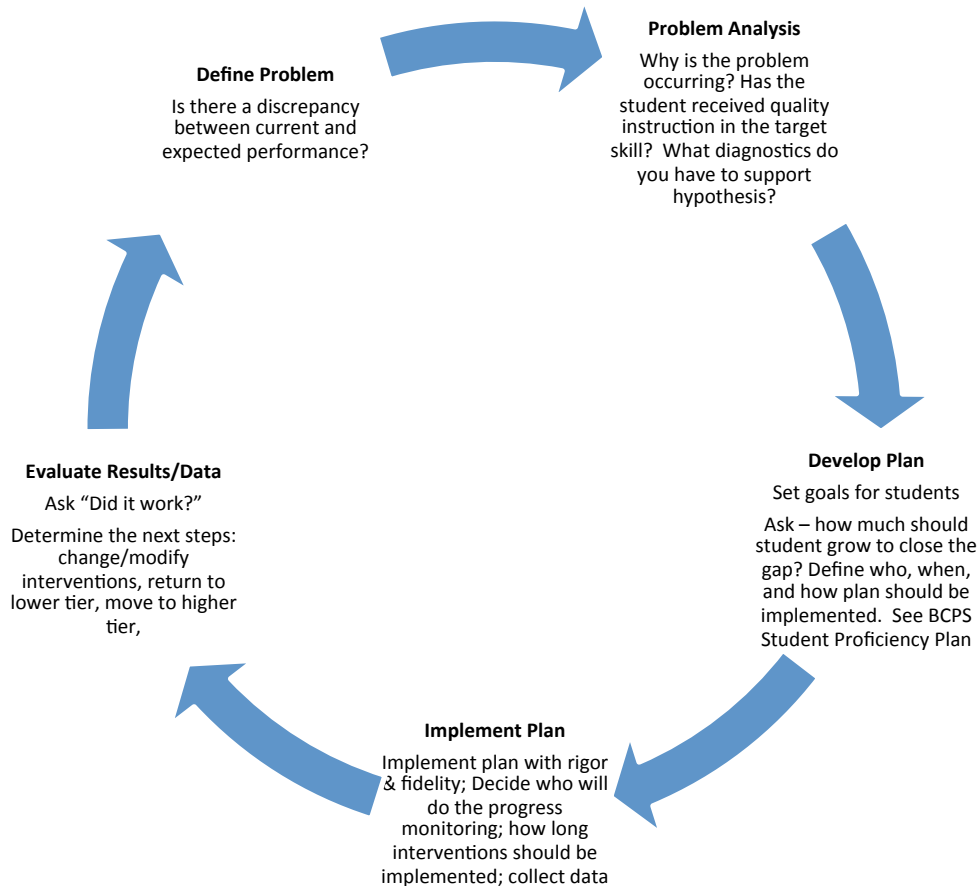
There are several aspects of RtI that are important to understand before implementation can be made system-wide.

Problem-Solving Team

Teams are composed of a variety of educational staff, including teachers, specialists, administrators, school psychologists, and other members as needed. Team members should include individuals who have a diverse set of skills and expertise that can address a variety of behavioral and academic needs.

Problem-Solving Process

The importance of assessment and effective instruction for RtI cannot be overstated. However, the problem-solving model serves as the overarching structure which organizes assessment and intervention activities. Therefore, problem solving lies at the heart of RtI. Problem solving means going beyond fulfilling procedural requirements and checklists to doing what it takes to resolve students' learning problems. The problem-solving model has been organized into a series of cyclical steps.



Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a systematic method for tracking and comparing an individual's or group's performance through data collection. A consistent monitoring plan is essential to determine the effectiveness of instructional programs and interventions. Progress toward meeting the student's goals is measured by comparing expected and actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, teaching is adjusted as needed. Thus, the student's progression of achievement is monitored and instructional techniques are adjusted to meet the individual students learning needs.

To understand progress monitoring, it is important to understand key terminology:

- **Benchmarks:** Expected rates of growth or learning. Usually measured three times per year (fall, winter, spring)
- **Baseline:** The initial performance taken on a student; often the median score of three baseline data points. The baseline serves as the reference point for all future data collection.
- **Goal (aim) lines:** the goal line depicts the anticipated growth and offers a comparison for the trend line. The goal line is typically shown as the expected rate of progress toward either the district goal or a goal developed by the problem-solving team.

Curriculum Based Measurement

The most effective assessment available for monitoring student progress on a specific skill is Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM). CBMs are designed to measure skill fluency in early reading literacy, oral reading, writing, and math computation skills. These brief probes (typically administered in 1 to 3 minutes) are used to monitor both the student's level of performance and his or her rate of performance growth related to age or grade-level expectations. CBMs are reliable and valid indicators of basic skills that are sensitive to instructional changes and useful for setting student goals and predicting future student performance (Deno, 2001; Fuchs et al., 1984). CBMs are forms of progress monitoring and are not considered diagnostic in nature. CBM probes are administered and scored using standardized methodology and are a valid and reliable method to develop district, school, or classroom level norms. National norms are often used to establish growth rates for students. Thirty years of research support the efficiency of CBM tools.

Data-Based Decisions

The most important part of progress monitoring is not just collecting data; it is *using* the data to make sound instructional decisions. Schools must look at the data regularly, implement decision-making rules, and use the data continuously to inform instruction.

Within the tiered continuum of service delivery, decision rules are necessary for moving students back and forth across tiers as educators address their needs for intervention delivery and eligibility decisions. These decision rules must rely on relevant student assessment data. At each step of the process, good decision rules ensure effective, equitable, and fair treatment across students. The Somerset Public Schools have developed these specific guidelines for data-based decisions:

- **Cut scores for determining risk status:** To identify students who are at risk, Somerset will use local comparative data from student performance on the benchmarks (or learning checks) from each grade level.
- **The frequency and duration of progress monitoring:** During Tier 2 and Tier 3 service delivery, the frequency and duration of progress monitoring will have an impact on whether sufficient data have been collected to determine a student's responsiveness to intervention. First, data must be collected with sufficient frequency to detect changes in performance following instruction/intervention. It should be no less frequent than one time per week. Second, the length

of the data collection period during intervention must be established. This may be determined by the specific intervention being used. A minimum of four weeks of intervention should be delivered. The length of time should allow for no fewer than six data points during an intervention phase. As with any test, the more data gathered, the more reliable the decision will be about whether a student is responding to an intervention.

- **Criteria for determining a student's responsiveness to intervention:** Determination of whether students are responding to interventions requires specifying decision rules based on students' level and rate of progress, both prior to and after the initiation of intervention delivery. This is established through trend line comparisons (or gap analysis), which will be explained later.

Understanding Norms

Data can be used to compare student performance to the typical student in specific academic or behavioral skills.

- **Local Norms:** Involves sampling the abilities of students at specific grade levels in a school or district.
- **National Norms:** Involves sampling the abilities of students nationally, or based on research collected over time.

Setting Ambitious and Realistic Goals

As discussed earlier, an important part of a problem-solving process is the setting of goals or expected criteria for the students to obtain. Setting goals that are realistic yet challenging is crucial to making good on-going decisions within a problem-solving model.

Goal setting can be done at both the group level as well as the individual level. For example, in an RTI model, it is expected that the implementation of a high quality, scientific, research-based instructional program implemented with fidelity at Tier 1 should result in successful outcomes with at least 80% of all students (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). When universal screening data find substantially fewer students successfully meeting benchmark, the indication is that changes are needed in the delivery of the core program (within Tier 1) to improve outcomes for all children; this must be done before a determination could be made of the degree to which supplemental instructional programs at Tier 2 are impacting the outcome. As such, problem-solving teams may put in place goals that reflect a focus on improving the school-based outcomes of student performance within the core program.

At the individual level, when students are identified through an RTI process as at-risk (and the core program is determined to be solid), it is critical that goals be established for the individual student so that the outcomes of his or her progress can be measured against appropriate expectations. By setting goals and monitoring a student's progress toward those goals, the impact of instruction can be assessed in an ongoing manner, and adjustments in instruction and goals can be made as the instruction is proceeding. Keep in mind that *the ultimate goal is to close the achievement gap and meet the academic expectations.*

A key element of effective goal setting whether used at the group or individual level is the establishment of benchmarks specifying the minimal expected performance across students. The rate of improvement (ROI) or slope is a key indicator that sets the criterion against which student performance will be compared. Closing the gap for those students whose starting point is below benchmark would be a critical goal for teams to consider.

Steps for Setting Goals

1. Identify starting point (or baseline)
2. Identify goal or benchmark (target)
3. Subtract current (baseline) level from target
4. Divide by number of weeks left until target
5. This will be your rate of improvement (ROI) to meet goal
6. Compare student's ROI with a typical, or average, ROI for that student's grade level.
7. Ask: Is this goal *realistic*? (With interventions, is this a goal that's possible to attain?)
8. Ask: Is this goal *ambitious*? (With interventions, will this goal allow for the gap to close or will the student simply not fall any further behind?)
9. Adjust goal if necessary

Goals should be monitored and may be adjusted based on student's progress.

End of Year Target – Current Score = Amount of growth to close gap

$$\frac{\text{Amount of Growth}}{\text{Number of Weeks}} = \text{Weekly Target}$$

Instruction & Intervention

To increase the opportunity for success at all levels within the RtI framework, instruction and interventions delivered to students should be supported by evidence of their effectiveness. A clear distinction is made between instructional strategies and interventions. A strategy is a tool, plan, or method used to guide and improve student learning. These strategies are more commonly referred to as differentiated instructional tools and practices.

A research-based intervention is one that is school-based, prescriptive, and has a clear record of success. RtI requires programs and interventions that have been validated in educational research. In essence, the following questions must be asked.

- Has the study been published in a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent evaluators?
- Have the results of the study been replicated by other scientists?
- Is there consensus in the research community that the study's findings are supported by a critical mass of additional studies?

Guidelines for Minimally Acceptable Interventions

1. Interventions are chosen based on classroom factors and reasonableness for the situation and severity of the problem.
2. Scientific evidence for the effectiveness of the interventions must exist.
3. Interventions are chosen based on students' instructional need (and not merely based on availability or convenience). This guideline means that there are individual student data to justify the choice of intervention.
4. There should be a pre-specified, structured, and organized plan for each intervention session.

5. Interventions should increase in intensity (i.e., frequency, length of intervention sessions, change in intervention strategies) in the event that a student does not make adequate progress as determined by the goal level established through the problem solving process (according to the criteria described in the previous section on data-based decision making).
6. There should be a minimum of 4 weeks of intervention sessions (and 6 data points) before a determination of effectiveness is made, unless the guidelines of the intervention specify otherwise.
7. Intervention sessions should be carried out as prescribed and there should be some evidence that they were carried out as planned. Evidence can include training, permanent products, and direct observation by an independent party.
8. There should be a minimum of two phases of intervention (based on decision criteria described in the previous section on data-based decision making) before moving a student to Tier 3 or making a referral for a special education evaluation.

Although evidence supporting an intervention's effectiveness is important, the intervention itself is only as good as the accuracy and consistency with which it is implemented. Fidelity refers to the degree to which interventions are implemented as planned. It is essential that safeguards be put into place to determine if those interventions are being carried out as they were intended. A student's responsiveness to an intervention may eventually be used in special education eligibility decision making. Therefore, school personnel must be confident that the intervention was performed with high levels of fidelity. Regular monitoring of intervention delivery through observations and checklists is integral to ensuring that the interventions continue to be implemented correctly and accurately (i.e., with "fidelity") and that they continue to benefit those whom they are intended to serve. Fidelity should be directly monitored by an independent observer other than the interventionist.

Instruction and Intervention Factors to Consider at all Tiers

- Were the programs and interventions used supported by scientific research?
- Were standard treatment protocols followed for the interventions with students? [fidelity checks]
- Were the interventionists trained in delivering the intervention with fidelity?
- Were the interventions delivered for a sufficient amount of time?
- Was a team used to help design and support the interventions?

Special Considerations in RtI

Students with Individual Education Plans

Because RTI encompasses all students, students with IEP's should always be considered to be part of the three-tiered model. It is imperative to include special education staff in the problem-solving process in order to review student eligibility, individual goals and objectives, and modifications on the IEP. Please reference [Appendix](#) for a flowchart when a student with an IEP is identified as At-Risk on the district benchmark.

Referral for Individual Evaluation for Special Education Services

For students who do not make adequate progress on their RTI plans, the problem-solving team may consider a referral for an evaluation for special education services. The data collected in the RTI process shall be considered as part of the referral process.

KEY TERMS & ACRONYMS

Benchmark assessments: Short assessments given at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to establish baseline achievement data and progress

Charting: Visual depiction of the student's performance data, relative to the baseline and aim line. Includes baseline data, aim line, progress monitoring data, and trend lines.

Core principles of RTI: Beliefs necessary for RtI processes to be effective

- All children can learn
- Early intervention for struggling learners is essential
- Use of multi-tier model of delivery is necessary
- Utilization of a problem-solving methodology

Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA): Measurement that uses direct observation and recording of a student's performance in the local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM): CBM is a method for monitoring student progress through a curriculum. It reflects the success of students' instructional program by using short, formative assessments that are normed.

Data-based decision making: A process in which school personnel engage in ongoing analysis of data from multi-level sources to provide a comprehensive picture of strengths and challenges and develop a plan to prioritize and address those challenges.

Data points: Points on a graph that represent student achievement or behavior relative to a specific assessment at a specific time

Dimensions of reading: The five research based dimensions of reading as outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (NCLB)

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Differentiated instruction: Process of designing lesson plans that meet the needs of the range of learners. Such planning includes learning objectives, grouping practices, teaching methods, varied assignments, and varied materials chosen based on student skill levels, interest levels, and learning preferences. Differentiated instruction focuses on instructional strategies, instructional groupings, and an array of materials.

Discrepancy: Difference between two outcome measures

- IQ-Achievement discrepancy – difference between scores on a norm-referenced intelligence test and a norm-referenced achievement test
- Difference between pre-test and post-test on a criterion-referenced test

Dual discrepancy: A dual discrepancy occurs when a student's performance and growth rate are both substantially below performance and growth rate of typical peers

Duration: The length of time over which a student receives an intervention (e.g., 15 weeks)

Essential components of an RTI process: Core components of an effective RTI process

- School-wide screening
- Progress monitoring
- Tiered services
- Fidelity of implementation

Evidence-based practice: Educational practices/instructional strategies supported by relevant scientific research studies

Fidelity of implementation: Implementing a program, system or intervention exactly as designed so that it is aligned with research and ensures the largest possible positive outcome

Formative assessment/evaluation: Classroom/curriculum measures of student progress; monitors progress made towards achieving learning outcomes; informs instructional decision making

Frequency: The number of times a student receives an intervention in a given timeframe (e.g., daily, twice weekly)

General Outcome Measure: A quick and reliable indicator of academic performance in such areas as reading, math, and written expression

Goal: Standard against which progress can be compared. Possible goals could be established based on the following:

- Norms
- Percentile cutoff
- Growth rates

Graph: Provides a visual representation of a large amount of data

Growth rate: Gives you a growth expectancy for each week of school year; Allows for obtaining student's baseline then monitoring progress while comparing to growth expectancy

Intensity: The length of time during which a student receives an intervention (e.g., 30 minutes)

Intensive interventions: Academic and/or behavioral interventions characterized by increased length, frequency, and duration of implementation for students who struggle significantly; often associated with narrowest tier of an RTI tiered model; also referred to as tertiary interventions, or TIER 3.

Interventions: Instructional strategies and curricular components designed to improve or remediate a certain set of skills

Key practices in RtI: Practices necessary for RtI processes to be effective

- Using research-based, scientifically validated instruction and interventions
- Monitoring of student progress to inform instruction

- Making decisions based on data
- Using assessments for universal screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostics

LEA: Local Education Agency: Refers to a specific school district or a group of school districts in a cooperative or regional configuration

Learning Disability/Specific Learning Disability (SLD) [*from federal regulation §300.309(a)(1)*]: The child does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet State approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas, when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or State-approved grade level standards:

- (i) Oral expression.
- (ii) Listening comprehension.
- (iii) Written expression.
- (iv) Basic reading skills.
- (v) Reading fluency skills.
- (vi) Reading comprehension.
- (vii) Mathematics calculation.
- (viii) Mathematics problem solving.

Learning rate: Average progress over a period of time, i.e. one year's growth in one year's time

Level: Current rate of performance on General Outcome Measures. Consider a student who was administered three reading probes and had scores of 100, 91, and 102. The median (middle) score of 100 would be the student's current level of current performance.

Maze fluency: A CBM method of assessing reading comprehension

Mean: The average of a data distribution; (the sum of scores divided by the number of scores)

Median: The middle score in a data distribution.

Normative scores: Scores that provide information about how a student performed relative to some comparison group (classroom, school, district, state, or national)

ORF: Oral Reading Fluency; words read correctly in a minute

Percentile rank: A number assigned to a score that indicates the percentage of scores found below that score.

Primary levels of intervention: Interventions that are preventive and proactive; implementation is school-wide or by whole-classroom; often connected to broadest tier (core or foundational tier) of a tiered intervention model; TIER 1

Probe (CBM): A brief, timed work sample made up of academic material taken from the student's school curriculum. These CBM probes are given under standardized conditions. For example, the instructor will read the same directions every time that he or she gives a certain type of CBM probe. CBM probes are timed and may last from 1 to 5 minutes,

Problem-solving model: Solutions to instructional and behavioral problems are addressed by going through a four-step process: (problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and plan evaluation); is sensitive to individual student differences; depends on the fidelity of implementing interventions

Problem-solving team: Group of teachers and school staff who meet regularly to help design interventions for and monitor progress of students who are at-risk for failure

Progress monitoring: Data used to frequently check student progress towards success; Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to frequently assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring procedures can be used with individual students or an entire class.

Quartile: One-fourth of a distribution of scores

Remediation: Instruction intended to remedy a situation; to teach a student something that he or she should have previously learned or be able to demonstrate; assumes appropriate strategies matched to student learning have been used previously

Response to Intervention / Response to Instruction / Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI): Practice of providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions

Scientifically-based/Research-based interventions: Instructional strategies and curricular components used to enhance student learning. The effectiveness of these interventions is backed by experimental design studies that

- Use empirical methods
- Include rigorous and adequate data analysis
- Have been applied to a large study sample
- Are replicable
- Show a direct correlation between the interventions and student progress, and
- Have been reported in a peer-reviewed journal

Scientific/Research-based instruction: Curriculum and educational interventions that have been proven to be effective for most students based on scientific study

Screening: See Universal screening

SEA: State Education Agency, refers to the department of education at the state level

Secondary levels of intervention: Interventions that relate directly to an area of need; are supplementary to primary interventions; are different from primary interventions; often implemented in small group settings; may be individualized; often connected to supplemental tier of a tiered intervention model; TIER 2

Specific Learning Disability: See Learning Disability

Standard Protocol Intervention: Use of same empirically validated intervention for all students with similar academic or behavioral needs; facilitates quality control

Strategic Interventions: Intervention chosen in relation to student data and from among those that have been documented through education research to be effective with like students under like circumstances; often associated with second tier of an RTI tiered model; also referred to as secondary interventions; TIER 2

Summative Assessment/Evaluation: Comprehensive in nature, provides accountability and is used to check the level of learning at the end of a unit of study

Systematic Data Collection: Planning a timeframe for and following through with appropriate assessments to set baselines and monitor student progress

Tertiary Levels of Intervention: Interventions that relate directly to an area of need; are supplementary to primary and secondary interventions; are different from primary and secondary interventions; usually implemented individually or in very small group settings; may be individualized; often connected to narrowest tier of a tiered intervention model; TIER 3

TIER 1, TIER 2, TIER 3: See Primary Levels of Intervention, Secondary Levels of Intervention, Tertiary Levels of Intervention, Intensive Interventions, Strategic Interventions

Tiered Instruction: Levels of instructional intensity within a tiered model

Tiered Model: Common model of three or more tiers that delineate levels of instructional interventions, based on student skill need

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Process of designing instruction that is accessible by all students; UDL includes multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement; the focus in creation of UDL curricula is on technology and materials

Universal Screening: A process of reviewing student performance through formal and/or informal assessment measures to determine progress in relation to student benchmarks; related directly to student learning standards. Those students whose test scores fall below a certain cut-off are identified as needing more specialized academic interventions. Universal screening usually takes place three times/year (Fall, Winter, Spring)

Validated Intervention: Intervention supported by education research to be effective with identified needs of sets of students

Parent RTI Letter

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____,

As part of district-wide efforts to improve student achievement, all Somerset students are given brief assessments three times per year (fall, winter, spring), in order to measure their progress in the curriculum over time. Your child did not meet the expected range for his/her grade level for this **first/second/third** benchmark assessment. To better meet your child's needs, we will begin working with him/her in the area(s) of _____ in a small group setting.

This extra support is referred to as an **intervention**. Interventions will be provided as needed to all students who did not meet expected levels of achievement in reading, writing, and/or math. This system of providing intervention based on individual needs is called **Response to Intervention (RTI)**. Your child will be involved in a level of RTI referred to as **TIER II**, which is best described as a level of intervention in which your child's teacher(s) use differentiated instructional strategies and/or interventions with your child. The teachers track each child's progress over time to monitor his/her success.

Please call _____, your child's teacher, at _____ as soon as it is convenient to discuss this process and to address any questions or concerns you may have. We need you as a partner in getting _____ on track for school success.

Respectfully,